DOES LESS MONEY MEAN MORE LOVE? PG12

Celebrity Buzz

Rihanna, Chris to appear on Oprah? pg 26

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VANCOUVER • THURSDAY, APRIL 2, 2009 metronews.ca

Style pg 20

Get mellow in sunny yellow

JOHN STILWELL/REUTERS

Barack and Michelle Obama with Queen Elizabeth at Buckingham Palace yesterday.

Her Majesty gets iPod from Obamas

SUMMIT U.S. President Barack Obama gave Queen Elizabeth II a personalized iPod during his visit to Buckingham Palace yesterday.

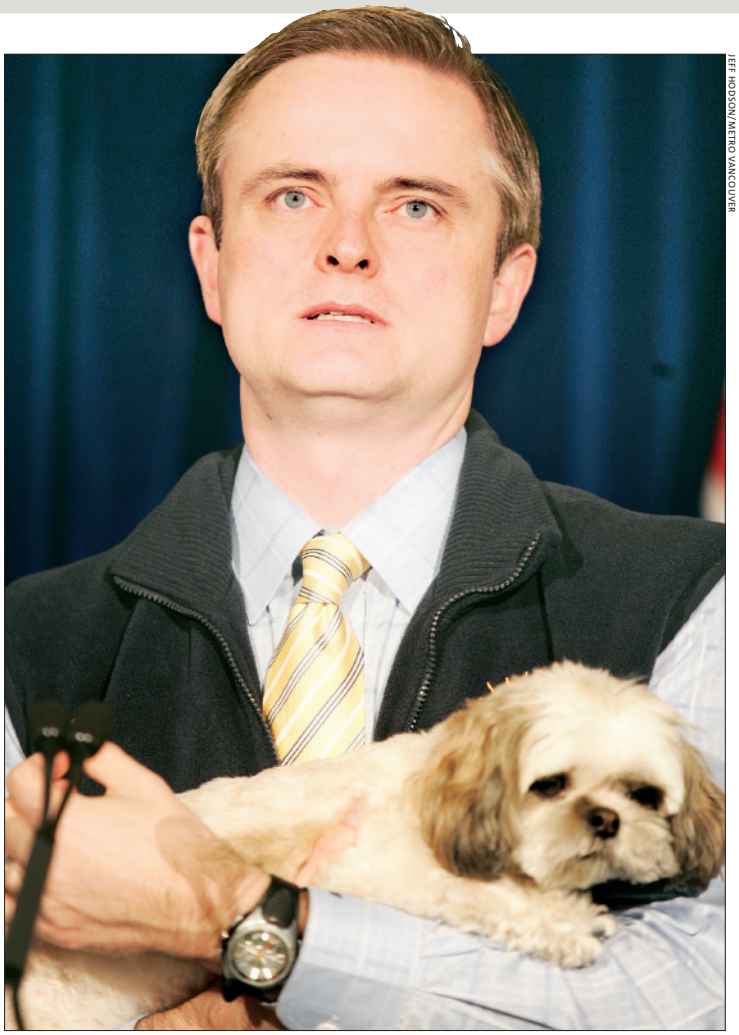
The iPod contains video and photographs of the Queen's 2007 visit to the United States.

In return, the Queen gave Obama a silver-framed, signed photograph of her and her husband, Prince Philip, a standard present for visiting dignitaries.

Obama was criticized by the British press last month for giving Prime Minister Gordon Brown DVDs of Hollywood films that did not work in European players.

Obama was in London for a meeting of the G20 nations on the global economy.

METRO VANCOUVER



JEFF HODSON/METRO VANCOUVER

Environment Minister Barry Penner, with Gizmo, a seven-year-old shitshu, at the B.C. SPCA yesterday in Vancouver. A bittering agent is being added to antifreeze in B.C. to make it less tasty to pets.

Antifreeze to be bitter

Soon to be less appealing to pets

JEFF HODSON
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Antifreeze in B.C. will never taste the same.

B.C. aims to prevent accidental poisoning of animals and small children by becoming the first province to require a bittering agent in toxic antifreezes and coolants, the environment minister announced yesterday.

"Ethylene glycol (antifreeze) is not only poisonous, but has a very sweet and inviting taste," said Barry Penner. "Unfortunately, it makes it very inviting to animals."

The addition of a bitter compound that is used in nail-biting remedies, aims to make antifreeze less inviting to pets and reduce the number that are killed every year.

Craig Daniell, CEO of the B.C. SPCA, said a tablespoon of ethylene glycol antifreeze will kill a small dog, even less will kill a cat.

"It is a horrible way for any animal to die," Daniell said.

Ingesting it causes vomiting, diarrhea, unconsciousness and kidney failure.

JEFF HODSON/METRO VANCOUVER

This vial of antifreeze is enough to kill a small dog.

Daniell is hopeful that the bittering agent will also help prevent the rare cases of intentional poisoning.

In October, a Great Pyrenees near Cranbrook died after it ate a piece of meat that had been soaked in antifreeze.

B.C.'s regulation, which takes effect in 2011, is based on similar ones in California and Oregon and would only add "pennies" to the price of a litre of antifreeze or coolants.

World pg 9

Protesters, cops clash at G20

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Police lay 10 charges against woman in Gibsons

INVESTIGATION Ten charges have been laid against the woman shot by police in Gibsons.

Linda Howe, 40, is accused of shooting at four workers, seriously injuring one.

Cpl. Peter Thiessen said Howe had a handgun and a shotgun when police arrived at the Good Samaritan Canada Christensen Village Care Home on Tuesday afternoon.

The three officers asked Howe, who was said to be carjacking someone at gun point, to stop. After not responding to their orders, police said, she was shot.

"On the basis of the female's actions with respect to the handgun, one of the members discharged his firearm," Thiessen said, adding Howe was hit at least once.

Police said the first shot was fired when staff went into Howe's room to evict her.

"Immediately after opening the door, one of the male employees was shot by the suspect," Thiessen said.

Howe and building manager Ken Perrier remain in serious condition at Vancouver General Hospital.

A friend told CBC News that Howe is a Gulf War veteran with post-traumatic stress disorder. According to David Croal, the woman also suffered a head injury after being hit by a car.

SAM SMITH/FOR METRO VANCOUVER

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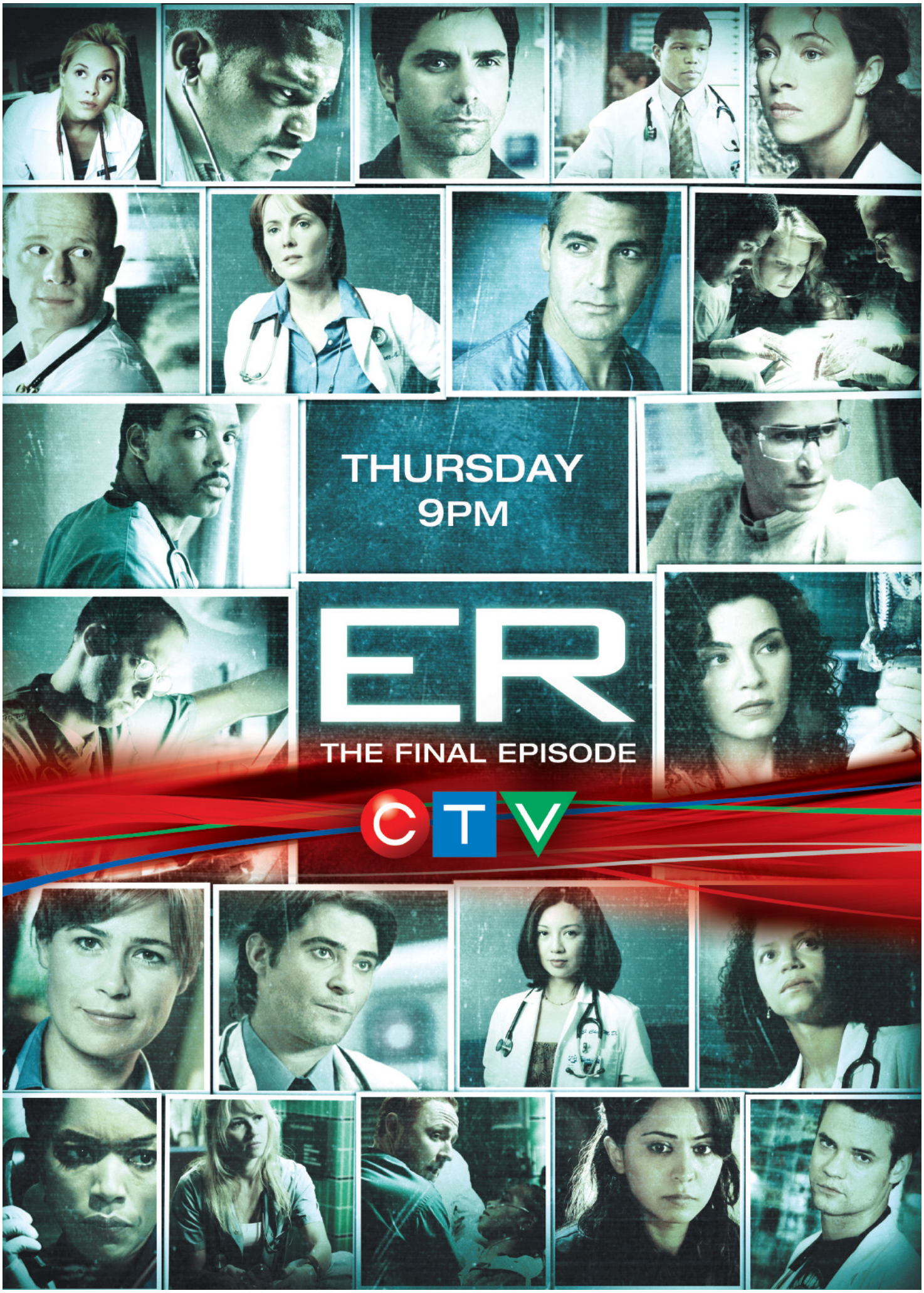
THURSDAY
9PM
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THE FINAL EPISODE
CTV

Monkey aims for world record
A Merritt woman has created a 2.7-metre-high sock monkey that she hopes will get into the Guinness Book Of World Records. Cherylle Douglas says her super-sized stuffie has already been invited for a beer at a local bar. CBC NEWS ONLINE

Local

Wolverine leaked

The Vancouver-filmed movie X-Men Origins: Wolverine has been posted online. The DVD-quality version of the film, which stars Hugh Jackman, left, is scheduled to open in theatres May 1. The FBI is investigating.
METRO VANCOUVER

News in brief

TAX The TransLink portion of the homeowner tax in 2009 is increasing by one per cent, the transportation authority announced yesterday. A home valued at $600,000 — the average in Vancouver — will pay an extra $16 this year.

GANG PLAN B.C. New Democrat Leader Carole James unveiled her party's anti-gang strategy in Vancouver yesterday. James said the NDP would hire 168 new police officers and establish a team of anti-gang prosecutors.
METRO NEWS SERVICES

metronews.ca
What's online today.

Video Pride on display as Nunavut marks its 10th anniversary at
metronews.ca/canada

Lotteries

Lotto 6/49	4, 6, 24, 32, 46 & 48 Bonus 8
BC 49	4, 9, 16, 32, 34 & 44 Bonus 22
Extra	13, 22, 28, 62

These results are not official.

'Complete twist of fate'

Together for 15 years, couple wins wedding for surviving 'tribulations'

KRISTEN THOMPSON
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When Coleen Duncan learned she'd won an all expenses-paid-for wedding yesterday, she was convinced it was an April Fool's Day joke.

Duncan, 37, who lives in Port Coquitlam, had entered a contest in February to win the $30,000 wedding, and was called yesterday to the studios of photographer Daniela Ciuffa after being told she was one of three finalists.

"I came down here expecting to be in the top three … and we walked through the door and were handed flowers and an invitation to our own wedding," said Duncan. "I feel like I'm in the middle of a dream."

Elana Lancit, a wedding planner and one of the organizers of the contest, said Duncan and her partner, Rob Richards, were chosen out of hundreds of applicants because they'd been together for 15 years despite going through "a lot of tribulations."

"They didn't give up on each other," Lancit said. "They deserved a break."

Duncan said Richards had struggled with alcoholism, which had almost torn them apart. They had also nearly lost their young daughter and were fostering two nieces.

"We put wedding plans on hold … and gave up the dream to buy a house (for the kids)," Duncan said. "So (this) is complete twist of fate. It's been 15 years coming."

The couple will be married on May 6 at the University of B.C. Boathouse.

Donors

- More than 15 local vendors are donating their time and expertise, including Images On Video Productions, Sweet Beginnings, Garlands Florists and Sound Explosion Entertainment.

DANIELA CIUFFA/WWW.CIUFFAPHOTOGRAPHY.COM

Coleen Duncan, Rob Richards and their children Emma and Jacob react to winning a dream wedding contest yesterday.

Bait Car goes live

CRIME The province's anti-auto theft "bait car" program now allows police to watch and listen to car thieves in real time.

Bait Car Live, unveiled yesterday at the start of Auto Enforcement Month, introduces live monitoring technology so police can tell how many people are in the vehicle and whether or not they are armed.

Police dispatchers will be able to watch and listen to thieves and relay any information to the responding officers.

With the previous bait car technology, officers could only watch the videos after the car was stopped.
METRO VANCOUVER

Decline

- There has been a 47 per cent decline in auto theft since the program's introduction in 2003. In that time, auto theft claims have fallen by $40 million.

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Local beer-maker introducing new label
Iconic Vancouver beer-maker Granville Island Brewery is launching a new India Pale Ale, Brockton IPA. The beer is named after the Brockton Oval in Stanley Park as the brewery marks 25 years in business. METRO VANCOUVER

Two injured in drive-by shooting

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CRIME Two men in their 20s were hospitalized after being hit in a drive-by shooting in Surrey.

The RCMP said the victims and two other passengers were in an SUV near 72nd Avenue and 132nd Street when people in another vehicle suddenly opened fire on them.

Insp. Dave Attfield said police received a call at 8:30 p.m. on Tuesday from one of the victims, who said he and a friend had been shot and they were on their way to hospital.

"One victim suffered serious but non-life-threatening injuries while the other person was treated and released," Attfield said.

"The occupants of the vehicle were known to police and it is believed that this was a targeted shooting."

Anyone with information about the shooting is asked to call police.

After-effects of cancer

Childhood survivors struggle with school, study shows

KRISTEN THOMPSON
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Childhood cancer survivors — particularly those who had brain tumours — tend to experience more learning difficulties in school than their peers, a new Vancouver-based study has found.

Brain-tumour survivors had problems with math and reading and all survivors were twice as likely to be enrolled in special education, according to the study conducted by the B.C. Cancer Agency, B.C. Children's Hospital and the University of B.C.

Kyle Karamos, 18, a high school student in Maple Ridge, was diagnosed with a brain tumour four years ago and underwent two surgeries and two rounds of radiation and chemotherapy.

He said while his health is good again, he's now having problems in school.

"I find it hard to concentrate and to retain information," Karamos said. "My memory has got a little worse."

PHOTO SUBMITTED

Kyle Karamos, 18, from Maple Ridge said he's had trouble concentrating at school ever since finishing chemotherapy.

Doctors said his symptoms are likely the result of the radiation and the stress caused to his brain by the tumour and surgery.

"The way I get around it is taking extra notes and reading over things more than once. I get extra time for taking provincial tests," Karamos said.

He added that he often stays home from school to study because it's quieter, making it easier to concentrate.

"It's something I'm going to have to cope with (for a while). I have to re-learn how to learn."

Mary McBride, principal investigator at the B.C. Cancer Agency, said researchers are learning more about the long-term effects of childhood cancer treatment because survival rates are increasing dramatically.

"The next step in our research is to address whether the education difficulties faced by childhood cancer survivors persist over time," she said.

News in brief

ROBBERY Three men — one of whom was armed with bear spray — robbed a Kitsilano jewelry store yesterday morning, making off with an undetermined quantity of jewelry. The men used a hammer to smash display cases at Costen Catbalue Goldsmith and Design.

PARKING A public hearing was held at Vancouver city hall for residents to discuss the municipality's proposed rate hikes at parking metres in high-traffic areas, CBC News Online reports. Parking is expected to increase by $1 per hour in Kerrisdale, Kitsilano and Commercial Drive, and parking-violation fines will increase by $10.

CRASH A Langley couple in their 90s were airlifted to hospital after driving across three lanes of oncoming traffic to get to a highway on-ramp. Their car was hit by a pickup truck. The couple is expected to recover.

GASTOWN The annual Tour de Gastown may be the latest victim of the recession because of a lack of sponsors, news1130.com reports. Only $40,000 of the $120,000 needed to stage the event has been secured. The Gastown Business Improvement Society will make a final decision next week. METRO NEWS SERVICES

Countries of the worldwide francophone community make up one-third of the member states of the United Nations. Our francophone community in British Columbia is rich in different forms of knowledge, of business, of culture and entertainment, and in contributions to fields as diverse as government, health, education and sports.

We're a community that adds many threads to British Columbia's social fabric. We've come from around the world to make our way in the world. Here. In British Columbia.

Coming from around the world works for B.C.

A TOAST?

Perhaps it's time to raise a timely glass in honour of French Baron Pierre de Coubertin, who founded the modern Olympic movement in 1896. But we're not sure even he could have imagined the kind of movement that's going to be heading to Vancouver in 2010.

french
A PART OF US

Local writer honoured
Vancouver writer Timothy Brook has won a $12,600 history prize for his book, Vermeer's Hat: The 17th Century and the Dawn of the Global World. CBC NEWS ONLINE

JEFF HODSON/METRO VANCOUVER

Striking paramedics picket outside the B.C. Ambulance Service office in East Vancouver.

Paramedics on strike

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Off-duty B.C. paramedics walked the picket lines at about a dozen sites across the province yesterday during the first day of job action.

Ambulances will continue to be staffed throughout the strike. In Vancouver, falling snow greeted the 100 paramedics who walked the picket outside the B.C. Ambulance Service office in East Vancouver.

"Spirits are great this morning," said John Strohmaier, president of the Ambulance Paramedics of B.C. "We're really pleased with the turnout."

Strohmaier repeated his call to Health Minister George Abbott to bring in veteran mediator Vince Ready to help with the negotiations.

B.J. Chute, a spokesman for the union, said the picketing paramedics will continue to "talk to the public about the deteriorating state facing the B.C. Ambulance Service."

Police identify two Abbotsford victims

Alexander Richards

Patrick Murphy

CRIME Police have identified the two men found shot to death in two separate locations in Abbotsford.

The body of Ryan Alexander Richards, 19, from Abbotsford was found in a field near No. 2 Road early Tuesday morning. The previous night, Sean Patrick Murphy, 21, from Mission was found shot to death in a car on Bateman Road.

"Police believe these homicides are not random and that there is a strong possibility the victims' own criminal lifestyles led to their deaths," said Const. Casey Vinet.

KRISTEN THOMPSON/ METRO VANCOUVER

Court bomb threat called in

SAM SMITH
for Metro Vancouver

The Pickton appeal trial was interrupted by a bomb threat.

COURT A bomb threat was called in to the Vancouver law courts yesterday, giving lawyers and judges an impromptu hour-long, mid-morning break.

The appeal of serial killer Robert Pickton's second-degree murder conviction was also interrupted.

Police evacuated and secured the building, sending in trained dogs to sniff out possible explosives, which were not found.

Sheriffs cleared the area after about an hour and reopened the courts at noon.

VANOC to release more tickets

OLYMPICS A second wave of tickets for the 2010 Games will go on sale June 6, VANOC CEO John Furlong announced yesterday at the end of a series of meetings with the International Olympic Committee's coordination commission.

The tickets will be sold on a first-come, first-served basis, unlike the first round that made use of a lottery system to dole out tickets.

The tickets will be available starting at 10 a.m. at Vancouver2010.com or through the 2010 ticketing centre at 1-800-tickets.

JEFF HODSON/ METRO VANCOUVER

New York extends film tax credits

PRODUCTION In a move that will affect film production here, New York state has extended a 30 per cent film- and television-production tax credit for one year. New York state has set aside $460 million in funding to give production companies tax breaks until 2013. REUTERS

News in brief

REWARD An elderly Langley woman is offering $1,000 for the return of her family heirlooms after her home was robbed. The roof at her retirement home had been renovated and her property taken from the attic.

CRASH A head-on collision in Surrey left one of its busiest roads closed last night. The crash happened around 5 p.m. on 108th Avenue.

JAIL Three Lower Mainland cities, including Delta, are interested in hosting the new pre-trial jail that Burnaby residents are rejecting, news1130.com reports. It would provide 200 jobs and create $18 million in economic activity. METRO NEWS SERVICES

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PETA plans hunt protest at clock

SEALS A group of protesters are dressing up like "bloody baby seals" and rallying by the Olympic Countdown Clock in front of the Vancouver Art Gallery at 1 p.m. today.

The action is part of a campaign by People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals to use the 2010 Vancouver Olympics to "shame" Canada into banning the annual hunt.

"As the world turns its attention to the Vancouver Games, millions will also focus on Canada's shame," said PETA executive vice-president Tracy Reiman. "If the Vancouver Organizing Committee wants to present a positive image of Canada to the world, it needs to call for an end to the universally condemned seal slaughter."

On Feb. 18, PETA released a "seal slaughter Olympic logo." The image is a parody of the Vancouver 2010's smiling inukshuk emblem. It features a snarling Ilanaaq with a hakapik raised over a baby seal and bloodied ice. Vancouver 2010 is written under the emblem and above the Olympic rings, one of which drips blood.

METRO VANCOUVER

UBC study shows species' influence

RESEARCH Scientists have come to agree that different environments impact the evolution of new species. Experiments conducted at the University of British Columbia are showing for the first time that the reverse is also true.

Researchers created mini-ecosystems in large aquatic tanks using different species of three-spine stickleback fish and saw substantial differences in the ecosystems in as little as 11 weeks.

Tanks with the two newest species had larger bits of decaying plants and animals. This prevented sunlight from penetrating the water and inhibited plant growth.

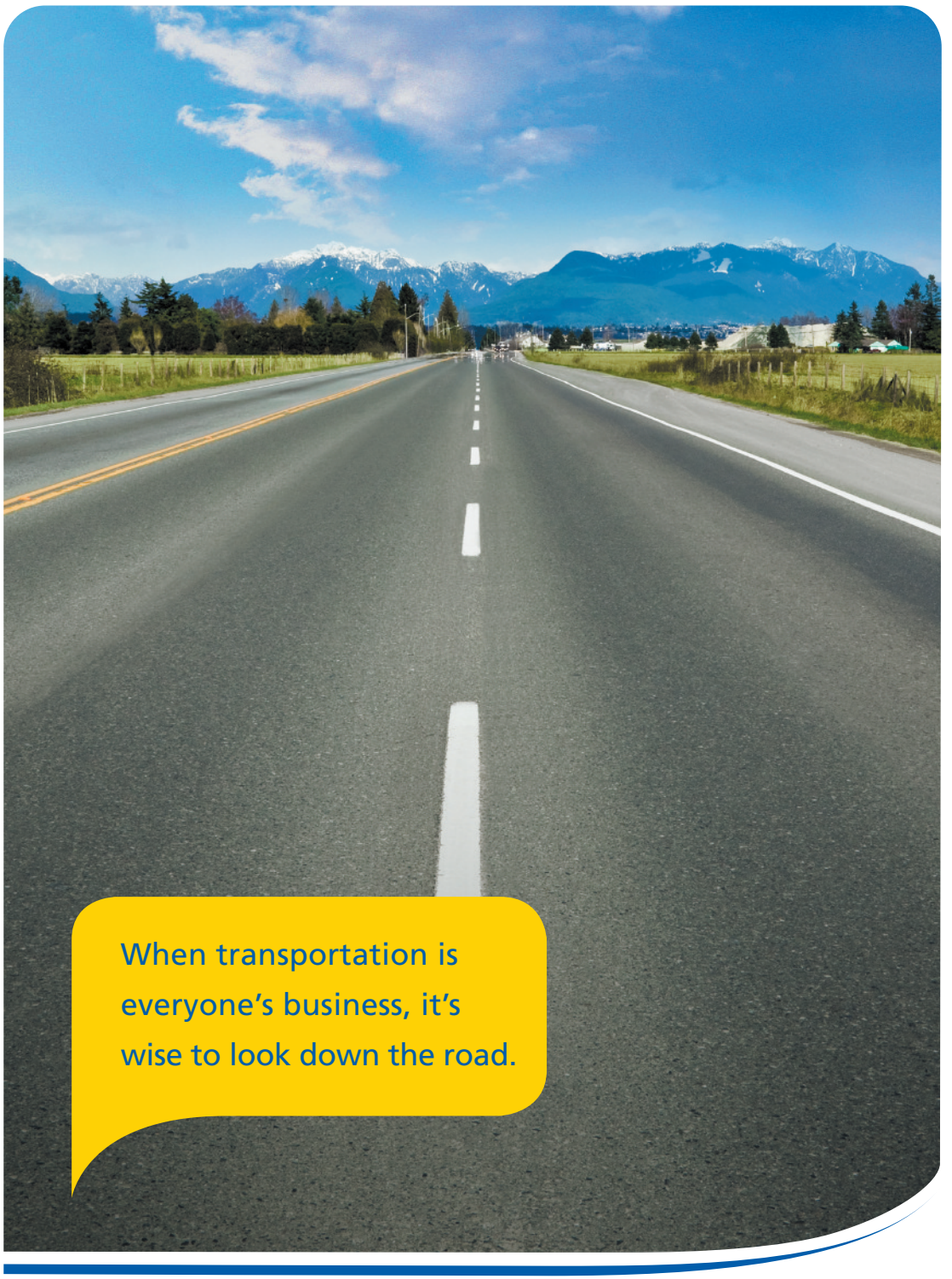
METRO VANCOUVER

News in brief

FUNDING B.C. is spending $163,000 to fund restorative programs across the province. A restorative justice approach may include a healing circle, a community justice forum, or a mediation session where an offender has to face his victim and make amends.

METRO NEWS SERVICES

TransLink funds and manages more than 2,300 lane-kms of major roads in Metro Vancouver.



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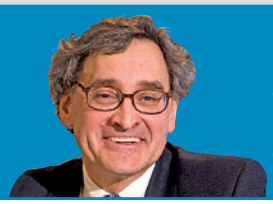
TransLink has created a long-range strategy to keep this region moving in the right direction. Now is the time to learn about Transport 2040 and help shape the next 10 years of our transportation future. Join the conversation at **www.bepartoftheplan.ca**

TRANSLINK

Conservatives eyeball Air Canada workers' pensions
The government is looking at the pension situation at Air Canada and will keep a watchful eye on the struggling airline, Transport Minister John Baird said yesterday. Baird told Parliament that pensions at Air Canada are federally regulated, and Ted Menzies, parliamentary secretary to Finance Minister Jim Flaherty, was looking at the issue. REUTERS

Canada



Buyout author nets major payout

BCE Inc. paid former chief executive Michael Sabia close to $21 million in compensation in 2008, according to a regulatory filing yesterday by Canada's biggest telecom company. Sabia, who left BCE after helping orchestrate its ultimately doomed $34.8-billion buyout, is the new head of the powerful Caisse de depot et placement du Quebec, Canada's largest pension fund manager. REUTERS

Recession could go longer, bank says

ECONOMY Canada's recession could extend through the second half of this year, the Bank of Canada said yesterday, backing away from an earlier forecast that growth would return in the third quarter.

Even though the economy contracted at perhaps its sharpest rate on record in the first quarter, Bank of Canada governor Mark Carney said in a speech there was no guarantee he would use additional tools at his disposal, including rate cuts or unconventional measures, to stimulate the economy as the central bank's benchmark interest rate approaches zero. He hinted that the bank could introduce additional stimulus simply by holding down rates, now at 0.5 per cent, for an extended period of time.

REUTERS

News in brief

DRUGS Canadian legislation intended to send cheap medication to poor countries fighting health epidemics may take on new life thanks to a Liberal senator from Montreal. Senator Yoine Goldstein introduced a bill on Monday to streamline the process generic drug makers undertake in order to manufacture life-saving medications from drugs under patent. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Big bust for Hogtown cops

More than 1,000 officers involved in morning raid on Toronto gangs

At least 125 people were arrested in pre-dawn raids yesterday in what Canadian police described as the largest-ever such operation against guns and gang crime in Ontario.

More than 1,000 officers were involved in the raids in the Toronto area that "targeted a high level of organized crime," Toronto police said. They also seized more than 40 firearms, cocaine, marijuana and other drugs.

Violence on rise

- Canada has seen an increase in gang-related violence in Toronto and Vancouver in recent years. The federal government said in February it would toughen sentences for gang-related crimes.

The investigation looked into violent crimes dating as far back as 2003, according to investigators, who said the charges include attempted murder, conspiracy and trafficking in weapons and drugs.

The arrests primarily targeted two gangs, the MNE and 400 Crew, who are based in southern and eastern Toronto, but involved crimes in several communities in the area, police said.

Forty-six of the people charged were members of the two gangs, but police said the arrests also included several people responsible for the distribution of guns and drugs to gangs throughout the Toronto area.

Police said more arrests were possible. REUTERS

Ottawa denies CSIS admission

TORTURE The Conservative government moved quickly yesterday to deny testimony by a CSIS official who said the spy agency still uses information that may have been obtained by torture "if lives are at stake." Public Safety Minister Peter Van Loan said Geoffrey O'Brian, adviser on CSIS operations and legislation, wrongly stated the policy and practice of the government and its spy agency.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Edmonton **Crazy train**

BEN HEMPHER/FOR METRO CANADA

Gobana Res, left, and Rayanna Wowchuk enjoy a ride at Galaxyland in the West Edmonton Mall yesterday afternoon during spring break in Edmonton.

Tories take shot at gun registry

POLITICS The federal Conservative government is making its third bid to bring in a law to abolish the national long-gun registry.

The bill, which the government said is identical to the last two legislative attempts, was tabled in the Senate, where the Liberals hold a majority.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper's spokesperson, Kory Teneycke, said the bill meets a longstanding platform commitment, and was sent to the Liberal-dominated Senate first because it could get hung up in that chamber longer.

But the Senate has few government bills to deal with right now, and debate could move more quickly.

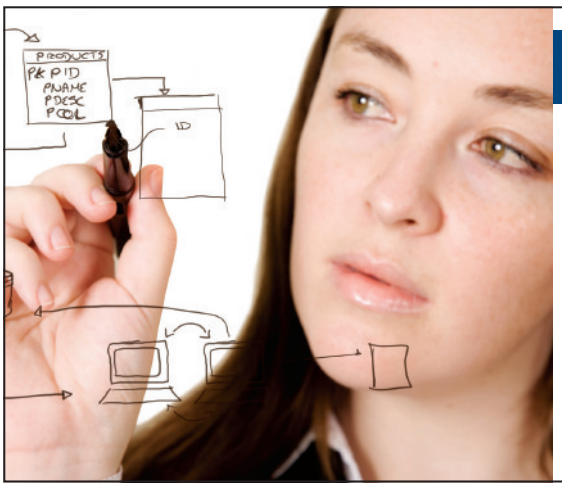
In reality, the move puts pressure on Liberal Leader Michael Ignatieff, who has been courting rural voters across Canada, to make clear his views on gun control.

"For rural Canada, this is a referendum on whether people understand the realities of rural life," said Teneycke. "In urban areas it gets bundled into gangs and gun control. We obviously see the issues of urban gun crime as very important."

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Amnesty

- Since spring 2006, funds and information for the registry have been choked off by the Conservatives' decision to grant yearly amnesties and fee rebates to the owners of rifles and shotguns. The latest amnesty runs until next month.



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Pistachio recall widens

The recall of pistachios due to potential salmonella contamination widened yesterday as more retailers removed products from store shelves as a precaution. Frito-Lay recalled its bagged pistachios in Canada, where they are sold under the Munchies brand. REUTERS

Super-farm defended

A million-acre grain and cattle farm planned by Sprott Resource Corp. represents a fork in the Prairie road for Canadian agriculture, but the super-farm's president and chief executive said family farms have more to gain than fear.

Sprott, an investment firm, is spending $27.5 million to launch One Earth Farms on First Nations land in Saskatchewan and Alberta at a time when grain prices are coming off last year's highs and the world economy sits in recession.

"This large investment, I think, speaks volumes about the optimism that exists looking ahead to the future of agriculture," said One Earth Farms Corp. CEO Larry Ruud. "This industry has been looking for additional capital ... Agriculture is a great place to be."

One Earth also helps answer the question of who will carry on Western Canada's farm tradition with the average age of farmers getting older, Ruud said.

Large corporate grain farms are a novelty in Canada, though well-established in Eastern Europe and South America. Investor-owned corporate beef and pork farms are more common structures in Canada.

REUTERS

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Suncor CEO upbeat about oilsands

RETURNS Existing oilsands operations generate double-digit returns with oil around $50 US a barrel and costs of new projects have started to fall in the industry downturn, the chief executive of Suncor Energy Inc., Canada's No. 2 oilsands producer, said yesterday.

The economics for Suncor are closer to break-even with oil at $40 a barrel, but prices may only dip that low once more this year, CEO Rick George said. REUTERS

Wounded soldier **A little girl's best wishes**

VINCE TALOTTA/TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Sgt. Thomas White, left, gave a big boost to Dakota Lee Allen, right, when she was feeling sick. Now she wants to return the favour. "I love him ... I want to give him a big hug and a kiss," said Dakota, 5, yesterday after she was told White had been wounded last month in Afghanistan and is recovering at a military hospital in Germany. Dakota, from Prescott, Ont., met White last year when she came to Toronto for heart surgery and he was there to repatriate a fallen soldier. Dakota attended the repatriation ceremony before her surgery, where she asked White to sign her flag.

News in brief

CALGARY The south building of the $1.4-billion Bow tower was put on hold yesterday as the developer decided to exercise the clause of deferring development for up to one year after the north tower is occupied. At 58 storeys, the north tower of the Bow project will be the largest office tower in Western Canada.

METRO CANADA

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Sweden votes in favour of legalizing gay marriage
Sweden will allow homosexuals to legally marry from May this year after parliament yesterday voted overwhelmingly in favour of the move. REUTERS

World

Young vegetarians at risk

Young vegetarians consuming plenty of fruits and vegetables are eating a healthy diet but they may also have an increased risk of binge eating and other unusual behaviours, researchers said. They found that about 20 to 25 per cent of current and former vegetarians in their study displayed unhealthy weight-control behaviours such as taking diet pills, vomiting, using laxatives and diuretics and binge eating. REUTERS

Police, protesters clash

63 arrested after demonstrations against G20 in London

British police clashed with protesters outside the Bank of England in the heart of London's financial centre yesterday during a day of demonstrations against the G20 summit.

Riot police staged baton charges to try to disperse several hundred people protesting against a financial system they said had robbed the poor to benefit the rich. At one stage, about 4,000 protesters had thronged outside the central bank.

Demonstrators attacked a nearby branch of the Royal Bank of Scotland, shattering three windows. Rescued by the government in October, RBS and former boss Fred Goodwin, who refused to give up a pension award worth $1 million US, became lightning rods for public anger in Britain over banker excess blamed for the crisis.

The protests were timed to coincide with a G20 meeting of the world's leading economies.

ANDREW WINNING/REUTERS

A demonstrator scuffles with police during protests outside the Bank of England in London yesterday.

Death

- A man died after collapsing during the protests, likely from a medical condition, a police source said.

Protesters hurled paint bombs and bottles, chanting: "Our streets! Our banks!"

As dusk fell, police charged against a core of anti-capitalist demonstrators to disperse them before nightfall. Bottles flew through the air towards police lines and police on horseback stood by ready to intervene.

Police said 63 protesters had been arrested by late evening. REUTERS

World leaders pledge new rules in response to crisis

ECONOMY World leaders are set to declare an end to unfettered capitalism at the G20 summit today in London after France and Germany demanded they act fast on promises to avoid repeating the worst economic crisis since the 1930s.

A communique drafted for release at the summit, obtained by Reuters, signalled that leaders would submit large hedge funds to supervision for the first time and enhance regulation through a new agency and a beefed-up International Monetary Fund.

It included a pledge to deliver "the scale of sustained effort necessary to restore growth" without making any commitments beyond the trillions being spent to stabilize banks, shore up demand and limit job losses. It also said tax havens would be identified and sanctions could be deployed. REUTERS

News in brief

INFECTION Malicious software installed on millions of computers has yet to wreak havoc on technology systems worldwide as some fear, but researchers warned that the Conficker worm could still strike in the future.

TALIBAN U.S. officials are studying whether a Pakistani Taliban leader poses a credible threat to the United States, a top U.S. military official said yesterday. REUTERS

Marijuana shown to reduce cancer growth

The active ingredient in marijuana appears to reduce tumour growth, according to a Spanish study published yesterday. The researchers showed giving THC to mice with cancer decreased tumour growth and killed cells off. REUTERS

Tough new rules for bailed-out firms

U.S. House approves legislation to limit pay at companies that took government cash

The House yesterday approved legislation to curb "excessive" employee pay at financial firms that receive government bailout funds, a measure that could supplant an earlier effort to heavily tax executive bonuses.

The bill, which passed on a 247-171 vote, would give the U.S. Treasury broad powers to prohibit "unreasonable and excessive" compensation and bonuses that are not based on performance standards.

The new curbs would apply to all employees, not just executives, of firms that have received capital investments from the Treasury's $700-billion financial rescue fund.

The standards also would cover compensation paid to an employee after leaving a firm or before joining it.

The "Pay for Performance Act of 2009" is among a number of efforts by Congress to claw back bonuses and curb pay in the wake of public anger over recent executive bonuses at insurer American International Group, which has received a bailout worth up to $180 billion.

"The Pay for Performance Act is based on two simple concepts. One, no one has the right to get rich off taxpayer money, and two, no one should get rich off abject failure," said one of the bill's authors, Representative Alan Grayson, a Florida Democrat.

"We should not pay an arsonist to put out his own fire, and we should not be paying an executive to ruin his own bank."

REUTERS

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Israel says deal 'has no validity'

NEGOTIATIONS Israel's new foreign minister angered Palestinians and raised the prospect of tension with Washington by saying yesterday that Israel was not bound by a deal to start negotiations on establishing a Palestinian state.

On his first day at the Foreign Ministry, right-winger Avigdor Lieberman said the U.S.-sponsored Annapolis declaration of 2007 "has no validity," confirming a shift in stance toward the Palestinians under new Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Annapolis

- At a conference in November 2007 hosted at Annapolis, Md., by U.S. President George W. Bush, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert agreed to further "the goal of two states" in immediate negotiations with the Palestinians.

Lieberman, a Soviet immigrant denounced as a racist by many Arabs, did stress however that Israel was obliged to follow the course charted by a U.S.-backed peace "road map" of 2003. That obliges Palestinian leaders to curb attacks on Israel before any negotiations on the final shape of a statehood deal take place.

Lieberman was effectively confirming that Netanyahu's new administration has withdrawn from its predecessors' commitment to negotiate on borders and issues like the status of Jerusalem before the two sides are satisfied road map pledges are met.

REUTERS

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Robert Kiyosaki will not attend this workshop.

where the Easter Bunny shops for chocolate

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Audit questions safety of airport water
Travellers can't be certain that water on aircraft and at Canadian airports, seaports and railway stations is safe to drink, says a new report. METRO NEWS SERVICES

Business

EDITOR: FERMIN.DESOUZA@METRONEWS.CA

KPMG hit with suit

Negligence blamed for lender's collapse

Accounting giant KPMG was hit with a billion-dollar lawsuit yesterday over claims its "grossly negligent audits" helped trigger the collapse of a top subprime mortgage lender at the start of the U.S. housing crisis.

New Century Financial Corp., the largest independent provider of home loans to people with poor credit, filed for bankruptcy two years ago amid mounting customer defaults.

Its failure rippled across the U.S. mortgage lending industry, sparking a string of other bankruptcies that roiled financial markets as banks booked losses on billions in mortgage-linked securities at the heart of the current global financial crisis.

"As New Century's auditor, KPMG failed its public watchdog duty."
Lawsuit statement

The lawsuit, on behalf of a liquidating trust formed by New Century debtors, was filed against both KPMG International and its U.S. arm, KPMG LLP.

It accuses KPMG of helping cover up "catastrophic" problems at New Century — including accounting and financial errors — that led to its collapse.

Its conduct flew in the face of U.S. laws put in place after "the Enron-era of financial reporting and accounting, when the public asked, 'Where were the auditors?'" the lawsuit says.

"As New Century's auditor, KPMG failed its public watchdog duty," it states.

KPMG has previously denied any wrongdoing in connection with its relationship at New Century.

The suit demands at least $1 billion US in damages.

REUTERS

China Alert to growth needs

REUTERS/STRINGER

A worker naps yesterday at the construction site of Wuhan North Railway Marshalling Station in China's Hubei province. Calling confidence "more important than gold or money," Premier Wen Jiabao effectively guaranteed that Beijing will do whatever it takes to maintain growth at an acceptable pace.

In brief

SALE Canadian Pacific Railway Ltd. is selling 67 per cent of its stake in the Detroit-Windsor Tunnel crossing to Borealis Infrastructure Management Ltd. for $132 million, the railway announced yesterday.
CBC NEWS ONLINE

LUMBER Canada will reluctantly pay the United States nearly $50 million for breaching a trade agreement covering softwood lumber exports, Trade Minister Stockwell Day said Tuesday.
REUTERS

Honda to cut N. America output as sales plummet

AUTOS Honda Motor Co., Japan's No. 2 automaker, said it would cut production in North America by temporarily shutting factories from next month and will reduce pay for workers as sales in the United States plunge.

Honda will shut down six factories for 13 days starting in May to cut production by 62,000 vehicles. Honda does not provide a production forecast, but the reduction would be equivalent to 3.4 per cent of what it built in the region in the year to March.

Data due out later are likely to show U.S. auto sales at the weakest monthly rates in more than 27 years.

"U.S. sales look set to fall about 40 per cent in March," said analyst Yasuaki Iwamoto.
REUTERS

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Comment & Views

Comment

Less money, more love?

Relating

Steve Collins

metronews.ca/collins

Some media reports suggest rotten economic conditions are creating a bull market for romance.

The claims are reminiscent of those dubious old theories of hemlines rising and falling with the economy, plus a little pop psychology about looking for security in insecure times and how a slowdown inspires consideration of things more important than money.

It sounds plausible enough. When one has been laid off, perhaps there is a little more time to devote to getting laid. And well might one, in uncertain times, grow more susceptible to the charms of someone to share one's life — and split the rent.

The evidence cited, though, is a little less than convincing.

Exhibit A: Since the economy began to tank, online dating sites have reported a spike in business. These, of course, are merely people who are looking for someone else, not necessarily finding them.

It could be equally true that the stampede of new singles on the market is a sign of a whole lot of dumping going on. The unemployed may have all sorts of time to update their Lavalife profile, but they are seldom at their most confident and attractive. (I write from couch-bound, self-pitying experience.)

On the web

- For more views on relating, go to Love Bytes at metronews.ca/blogs

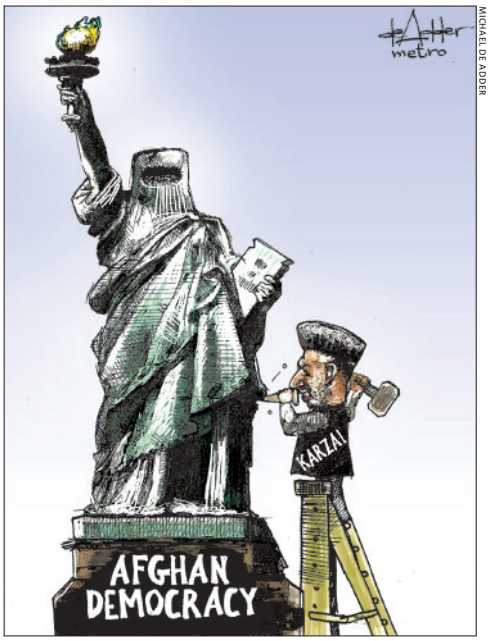
Exhibit B: Adult toy shops are also touting a surge in business, the implication being that couples are cutting their entertainment expenses and staying in for cheap thrills. But a hefty proportion of their wares, it must be noted, are perfectly serviceable in a do-it-yourself context. No compelling indication of a recession-driven stampede of romantic mergers here, either.

Money is often cited as one of the worst sources of tension in a relationship, and it goes all the way to the top. Federal Finance Minister Jim Flaherty and his wife, Ontario MPP Christine Elliott, last week found themselves on opposite sides of the harmonized sales tax debate in Ontario. Ms. Elliott stated that despite the disagreement, they would remain married. The Minister has expressed relief.

But if money is the root of your relationship-rocking squabbles, less money is hardly a solution. Ironically, though, there are some signs that divorces are down, as couples who might otherwise bail eye the potential legal bills and decide to hang in for now.

So are we getting more with less? The signs are inconclusive, and economists do a bad enough job of predicting our behaviour with money, let alone love and money. Do you feel lucky?

Steve Collins offers his best guesses on relationships for Metro every two weeks.



MICHAEL DE ADDER

Views

Afghan law about power, not culture

Mona Eltahawy

Global View

I thought I was used to seeing politicians bargain with each other. A few concessions here and there to influential voting blocs are part of the elections game.

But Afghan President Hamid Karzai — the "liberal" darling of the international community — surely wins that game by throwing women's rights like bargaining chips at the feet of religious conservatives he's courting for Afghanistan's August presidential election.

In February, he signed a new law that, according to United Nations organizations, legalizes rape within marriage and bars women from leaving their homes without permission from their husbands.

Déjà vu, anyone?

Senator Humaira Namati, a member of the Afghan parliament, told a British paper the law was "worse than during the Taliban," which denied women basic rights such as education when it ruled Afghanistan from 1996 to 2001.

News of the new law broke at an international conference for Afghanistan being held at The Hague. The reports offer both a fortuitous chance to embarrass Karzai for so cheaply selling out women, and a test for the 72 countries and organizations gathered at The Hague on how willing they are to defend Afghan women.

Since the Taliban's ouster, much has improved for Afghan women. Millions of girls now attend school and women have a 25 per cent quota in parliament. In March, a female lawmaker, Shalah Attah, said she would run for president in August polls.

So what was Karzai thinking?

Despite the re-emergence of the Taliban, the law has less to do with its misogyny and more with Karzai's election manoeuvring.

If it wasn't enough that millions of Afghan women still face violence at the hands of the Taliban, they now have to watch a president who claimed to be an ally bargain away their rights.

The law covers members of Afghanistan's Shia minority, who account for about 10 per cent of the population, and was backed by the influential Shia clerics and parties who are objects of the increasingly unpopular Karzai's affection.

Although the Afghan constitution allows Shia to have a separate family law, that same constitution and international treaties signed by Afghanistan promise women equal rights.

Afghan women parliamentarians and activists have condemned the law and said they're worried another law being drafted for the country's majority Sunni women will be equally harsh.

The international community has a perfect opportunity to corner Karzai at The Hague, but it must remain silent out of misguided cultural relativism that shortchanges women.

Afghanistan's new law has nothing to do with culture or religion and everything to do with power and politics.

Mona Eltahawy is an award-winning Egyptian-born commentator and public speaker on Arab and Muslim issues. She reported on the Middle East for 10 years before moving to the U.S.

Worth mentioning

Stem cells may offer deafness cure

HEALTH Stem cells may help deaf people hear again, according to early stage research by British scientists.

A team at the University of Sheffield said they had discovered how to turn stem cells into ones that behave like sensory hair cells or auditory neurons, which could then be surgically inserted into the ear to restore lost hearing.

Lead researcher Marcelo Rivolta said the approach, which is being tested on animals, holds significant potential, but is a long way from being offered to patients.

"It will take several years before we are in a position to start doing human trials," he said in a telephone interview.

The cells in the ear that detect sound are created only in the womb, which means there is no way to repair them once they have been damaged, resulting in permanent hearing loss.

Using stem cells — master cells that produce all the body's tissues and organs — to generate these cell types in the laboratory could change that dramatically.

Rivolta's research parallels more advanced work on the eye by another group of British-based scientists, who plan to use stem cells to treat age-related macular degeneration, a common cause of blindness, in clinical tests starting in 2010 or 2011.

REUTERS

Metro Online Poll Results

16% SAID YES	Do you expect any positive news from the G20 summit? *Weigh in on today's question at metronews.ca*	84% SAID NO

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Felicien to run this month

Canadian hurdler Perdita Felicien will make her 2009 debut in the 100-metre hurdles at the Sun Angel Classic in Tempe, Ariz., April 11. The Pickering, Ont., native missed the Beijing Olympics last year with a foot injury. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Sports

Yes, he is really good

The Cleveland Cavaliers have set up a website with a particularly long URL to promote LeBron James as this year's NBA MVP. The site, LeBronisReallyReallyReallyReallyReallyReallyGood.com, uses the word 'really' six times to represent each year James has been in the league.

METRO NEWS SERVICES

EDITOR: JOHN.CHICK@METRONEWS.CA

Richmond locks up No. 5 spot for Jays

MLB Just before defeating the Washington Nationals 7-6 in their final pre-season home game in Dunedin, Fla., the Toronto Blue Jays provided definitive answers for a pair of nagging roster questions.

Richmond

An hour before the game, they sent left-handed pitching prospect Brad Mills to their Triple-A farm team in Las Vegas. That means North Vancouver's Scott Richmond becomes the No. 5 starter. Richmond makes his final spring training start today against the Tigers without the burden of wondering whether he'll make the team.

"It'll feel good knowing that it's not a decision-making start," Richmond said. "Either way, I plan on ending spring with a good start and going up to Toronto with a good one under my belt." Richmond went 1-3 with a 4.00 ERA in five late-season starts with the Jays last year.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Sports in brief

CFL The BC Lions announced yesterday that safety Barron Miles has signed a contract extension with the club through the 2010 season. Miles led the CFL with nine interceptions last season, second to his career-high. METRO NEWS SERVICES

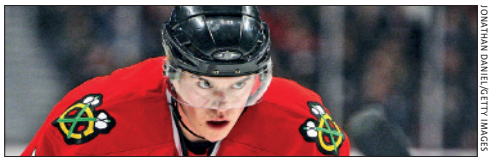
For more sports coverage visit: metronews.ca

Blackhawks beat Blues

NHL RESULT

Blackhawks 3 Blues 1

Jonathan Toews and Samuel Pahlsson each tallied in the first period as the Chicago Blackhawks defeated the St. Louis Blues 3-1 at United Center.



JONATHAN DANIEL/GETTY IMAGES

Jonathan Toews scored a first-period goal last night for the Chicago Blackhawks, who beat the St. Louis Blues, 3-1.

Colin Fraser added a short-handed goal for Chicago, which recovered from a 4-1 setback at Montreal on Tuesday. The Blackhawks, who have won four of six overall, claimed their first win of the season over St. Louis (1-4-1). They now have 93 points and moved into a third-place tie with Vancouver in the Western Conference.

Nikolai Khabibulin stopped 16-of-17 shots for the Blackhawks.

Jeff Woywitka scored for the Blues, who had their five-game winning streak snapped. St. Louis remains in ninth place in the conference with 83 points and are one point behind Nashville and Anaheim for the eighth and final playoff spot in the West.

Chris Mason made 27 saves for St. Louis.

Chicago drew first blood when Toews lit the lamp with 8:15 left in the opening period. The Blackhawks centre took a pass from Martin Havlat along the boards, skated into the low slot and slid the puck past Mason on the stick side to give the hosts the lead.

Pahlsson then made it a 2-0 game a little over four minutes later when he put one home from in close on a feed from Andrew Ladd from behind the net.

After a scoreless second period that saw the Blackhawks outshoot the Blues by a 10-4 margin, the hosts took a two-goal cushion into the intermission.

With Patrick Kane in the box serving a hooking minor late in the third, Chicago struck for a shorthanded tally. Fraser took a pass from Patrick Sharp and chipped a backhander that just got over the glove hand of Mason to up the hosts' lead to 3-0 with 4:31 left in the contest.

METRO NEWS SERVICES

Staying healthy key for Canucks

With games against motivated clubs from Anaheim, Edmonton and Calgary on the horizon, there will be plenty of talk about what Vancouver can hope to gain from these contests.

Some will speak of momentum, others will point to the "playoff-like intensity," and most will reference a Northwest Division title and the home ice that accompanies it.

While there is validity to each of these, the most important thing to Vancouver's playoff chances is getting through the remaining schedule without suffering any injuries.

The Canucks have been ridiculously healthy through this fantastic two-month run, and have proven they can compete with any opponent when firing on all cylinders. But one needs only look back to January to see the affect that injuries can have.

It's no coincidence that the bulk of Vancouver's struggles occurred with Roberto Luongo and Sami Salo on the shelf, while Mats Sundin went through a mid-season training camp.

Though six wins over the final six games would be ideal, the Canucks would trade half of those victories for a clean bill of health heading into the post-season.

• Barron Miles is back with the Lions. The perennial all-star safety has signed a two-year extension to remain in B.C., and is said to be in better shape than ever.

That comes as no surprise as Miles did not play up to his lofty standards last season, despite leading the CFL in interceptions. His statistics overshadowed a number of uncharacteristic mistakes, but he sounds like a man on a mission to regain his form this season.

Scott Rintoul can be heard Monday-Friday on the TEAM 1040 from 6-9 a.m. scott.rintoul@team1040.ca.

ToulBox

Scott Rintoul

metronews.ca/toulbox

Tonight

VS

7 p.m.
Sportsnet/TEAM 1040

Two hot teams collide at GM Place as the Ducks roll into town for their final visit of the regular season. Vancouver has the best record in the league since the start of February at 20-5-1, but Anaheim has won eight of its last 10 games in a desperate push to make the post-season. The Canucks have won two of three prior meetings this season, but the Ducks won the most recent battle 4-3 in overtime.

OVER EARLY?: Henrik Sedin was named the NHL's second star of the month a day after scoring his career-high 19th goal of the season. He has seven goals in his last 10 games.

METRO NEWS SERVICES

Sedins know their second stars

NHL Two days after Daniel Sedin picked up NHL second star of the week honours, his brother Henrik captured second star for the month of March yesterday. Henrik helped the Canucks to the top of the Northwest Division by registering 19 points with seven goals and 12 assists in 15 games. Vancouver went 11-3-1 during the month and Sedin's overtime goal on Tuesday gave the Canucks a victory over Minnesota, enabling the club to end March with a one-point edge over Calgary in the division. Carolina Hurricanes goaltender Cam Ward was selected first star of March.

METRO NEWS SERVICES

SCOREBOARD

NHL

PLAYOFF RACE

	Pts
San Jose	111
Detroit	107
VANCOUVER	93
Chicago	93
Calgary	92
Columbus	88
Nashville	84
Anaheim	84
St. Louis	83
Edmonton	81
Minnesota	81
Dallas	78
Los Angeles	73
Phoenix	73
Colorado	64

YESTERDAY'S RESULTS

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Officer resigns
The Dallas police officer who pulled out his gun and threatened an NFL player with jail instead of allowing him inside a hospital where his mother-in-law was dying resigned yesterday. Officer Robert Powell had been placed on paid leave pending an investigation of the March 18 incident. METRO NEWS SERVICES

Danton months from parole

NHL Former NHL forward Mike Danton will likely spend several months in custody in Ontario even though his time in an American prison for a failed murder-for-hire plot has made him eligible for parole, correctional officials said yesterday. Danton pleaded guilty in 2004 in a plot that targeted his former agent, David Frost, and was sentenced to 7 ½ years in prison.
METRO NEWS SERVICES

NBA Raptors snap Magic's six-game win streak

KEVIN KOLCZAK/REUTERS

Toronto's Jose Calderon is caught between Orlando Magic forward Hedo Turkoglu and guard Rafer Alston in Orlando last night. The Raptors won their fifth straight, 99-95.

Canucks in good spot regardless

TheHockeyNews
Sam McCaig
thehockeynews.com

With a handful of games remaining in the regular season, the Vancouver Canucks have an interesting decision to make.

Do they want to go into the playoffs as an underdog with upset potential, or do they want to go in as a top-seeded favourite?

The benefits to holding off the Calgary Flames and winning the Northwest Division are obvious.

First off, it means the Canucks would get the No. 3 seed in the Western Conference — hello, home ice in Round 1 (and maybe even Round 2 if things break right).

Also, as a top seed, the first round would be a little friendlier; Vancouver likely would face the Columbus Blue Jackets, an expansion franchise making its first foray into the post-season, rather than Chicago or Anaheim.

Nothing's guaranteed, of course, but an opening matchup against a team with little playoff experience is always going to be preferable over a springtime-tested team.

Finally, winning the division would be the perfect conclusion to two-plus months of near-perfect hockey.

The Canucks, with one of the league's best records since the All-Star Game, have morphed from a playoff bubble team to a legitimate force in the West. With a division title in their back pocket, they'd be oozing confidence as they cruised into the post-season.

Then again, there are a couple of perks to an under-the-radar approach. If, say, the Canucks fail to capture the Northwest, they're still looking good for the No. 4 seed — so they'd still get home-ice advantage in Round 1 (and maybe even Round 2). Their opponent would probably be the Blackhawks and, yes, it would probably be a tougher series than the Jackets.

The Hawks have goalie Nikolai Khabibulin, who led Tampa Bay to the Stanley Cup in 2004, and this year has easily been his best season since that memorable championship run.

But other than Khabibulin, Sami Pahlsson, Brian Campbell and Martin Havlat, Chicago, like Columbus, is virtually devoid of playoff experience. Another potential positive to a low-profile playoff entrance is the reduced expectations that come with being a lower seed.

Let's face it, the Canucks aren't exactly overloaded with playoff experience and Cup-winning veterans.

Maybe the payoff isn't worth it if the No. 3 seed comes with a big target on your back. The Canucks are good, but surely they'd rather sneak up on teams than have everyone gunning for *them*.

Regardless whether they're a top seed or middle-of-the-pack in the West, the Canucks' charge up the standings in the second half of the season altered perceptions and raised expectations.

They might not be of the same calibre as Detroit or San Jose, but they've proven they belong in the next tier of contenders.

The Hockey News thn.com

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Sports in brief

NFL Cleveland Browns wide receiver Donte Stallworth was charged yesterday with killing a pedestrian last month while driving drunk on a Miami street. A warrant charging Stallworth with DUI manslaughter was filed in the March 14 accident that killed a 59-year-old man. If convicted, Stallworth would face a 15-year prison sentence.

MLB New York Yankees pitcher Joba Chamberlain pleaded guilty yesterday in Nebraska to a charge of drunken driving and was given probation. After a plea deal, prosecutors dropped a second charge of driving with an open alcohol container in his vehicle. Chamberlain was pulled over Oct. 18 by police.
METRO NEWS SERVICES

For more sports coverage visit: metronews.ca

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Metro Homes

His and her tip

When decorating with your significant other, balance is important. If the room seems too feminine with light colours, delicate furniture, and flowery fabrics, for example, introduce some more masculine elements such as dark colours and simple, streamlined shapes. Or just keep the decor more gender neutral. METRO NEWS SERVICES

EDITOR: DOUGLAS.DUNLOP@METRONEWS.CA

Petal power

Brand new cotton threads for your bed

COMFORTING Ruffled blossoms burst from a crisp canvas of white cotton and embroidered foliage in Anthropologie's new top-of-bed threads. Ibbie 300-thread-count cotton percale queen duvet is about $309. Standard shams around $110 per pair. See anthropologie.com

—BRETT WALTHER

Back in black (basalt)

Waterford Wedgwood resurrects the triumph that launched the career of the world's most famous potter.

The scene

In the 18th century, the designers of the day were quite literally digging up inspiration. The rage for everything neoclassical was ignited by archeological finds at Pompeii and Herculaneum, creating an insatiable demand for decorative objects depicting ancient Greek, Roman and Egyptian figures and motifs. In an attempt to mimic basalt — a stone used in Egyptian statuary — a number of potters in Staffordshire, England, had begun making crude black earthenware vases and tableware known as Egyptian Black.

Enter the inventor

Having established his own factory in Staffordshire in 1759, Josiah Wedgwood was a pioneer among potters — a tireless inventor intent on elevating Egyptian Black to a contemporary classic. In 1768, he succeeded with his fine-grain, unglazed black stoneware, which he christened black basalt. Made from Staffordshire clay and stained with cobalt and manganese oxides, the exceptionally smooth, porcelain-like finish and rich hue of black basalt launched Wedgwood onto the world stage.

Today

To mark Wedgwood's 250th anniversary, Waterford Wedgwood has released a collection of black basalt.

"They're simple and elegant, and mix and match well with other pieces," says Martha McKee, vice-president of media and communications for Waterford Wedgwood Canada and a confessed black basalt junkie.

Select pieces from Martha's own collection are being shown in the "Wedgwood: Artistry and Innovation" exhibition at the Royal Ontario Museum (rom.on.ca) on display until July 5, 2009.

—WRITTEN AND PRODUCED BY BRETT WALTHER

GEOFFERY ROSS PHOTO

Black basalt traditional teapot, $360; espresso cup and saucer, $185 per set; 650 ml jug, $220; cream cup $160; covered sugar cup, $185. All designs by Waterford Wedgwood, waterford-wedgwood.ca.

Decor
Read more in the April issue of STYLE AT HOME magazine.
ON SALE NOW! styleathome.com | styleathome

Forget fake, soulless art: Enlist the pure energy of kids

UrbanDweller

Carlyn Yandle
metronews.ca/urbandweller

If art is meant to provoke ideas and discussion, mass-produced 'home decor' wall art brings any thoughts to a grinding halt.

The only value in those made-in-China cheapos is that they tie a room together. That works if the room is a display suite or it's where you wait for the dentist to call you. But if that room is in your own living space, you're going to quickly tire of that $29.95 cherry blossoms-Buddha montage or black-and-white Eiffel Tower from Ikea. There's no soul, no back story to these works of artlessness.

However, I do get to thinking when I come across yet another trio of 'original' oil paintings of droopy tulips in a vase, or the billowed-curtain, open-window view of some anonymous ocean. I think of the first scene in Manufactured Landscapes, and imagine one of those cavernous factories full of lowly-paid workers mechanically daubing thick paint onto an endless line of identical ink-jet-printed stretched canvases.

"I'm talking about those people whose unrestrained creativity inspires even the most successful artists."

Not the kind of thoughts one likes to have when one kicks off her shoes and sinks into the sofa at the end of the day.

But I'm not here to condemn someone's choice to buy fake art; I'm hoping to promote a special group of gifted innovators whose highly original artworks don't get the respect they deserve. I'm talking about those people whose unrestrained creativity inspires even the most successful artists.

I'm talking about your kids. Or your kids' kids. Or your friends' kids. Or your kids' friends.

They might select colour according to how much they like that colour, subject according to their own inner universe. And unlike the likes of Matisse, Picasso or Cezanne, they do not strive to break the rules because they haven't learned them yet.

The fridge door might be fine for a spontaneous scribble, but a drawing or painting that a child has created with passion deserves to be set in a mat, framed and situated in a place of honour, like the living room.

For best results, smooth the picture with tack spray onto foamcore trimmed to fit a purchased frame, with or without a mat.

I like the idea of dedicating one large frame per kid, updated as the young artist creates, with earlier artworks filed into a binder or rolled up into a poster tube labelled with his or her name. What a gift for them when they're 30.

CARLYN YANDLE PHOTO

Celebrate kids' creativity and bring a little soul to your own space by framing their favourite artworks and hanging them in a place of honour — like this dining room.

Carlyn Yandle is a Vancouver journalist with her own room-planning business, Home Reworks; carlyn@homereworks.com.

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Stage your loft right for the sell

HouseLeague

One of the great things about Vancouver is there is no shortage of housing styles in the city. Keeping that in mind, it is important to remember that each housing style must be staged and marketed in its own unique way. Lofts are no exception to that rule.

"It is important to remember that each housing style must be staged and marketed in its own unique way. Lofts are no exception to that rule."

Single-storey, New York-style and double-storey lofts are becoming popular in the Vancouver area. Neighbourhoods like Gastown and Yaletown are booming with warehouse conversions adding to the number of loft units on the market. It is important to take advantage of all the natural features these units possess.

If you have original brick walls, avoid painting them and use them as a focal point. Try to frame double-height windows with neutral modern drapery instead of blocking them with tall pieces of furniture and outdated vertical blinds. Salvaged wood and concrete flooring are also big selling features in the spaces. Don't cover them with carpeting, even in the bedroom.

Kitchen and bathroom

Rooms such as the kitchen and bathroom should be designed with all the modern amenities you find in an upscale home.

These are the rooms where outdated pieces are never desired and can turn a buyer off. Stick with stainless steel appliances, and granite or composite counter tops that fit with the industrial look of a loft.

The cabinetry can be any style you like (such as wood or laminate, dark or light colours) as long as you carry that style through the rest of the space.

Because lofts are essentially a large single room with a bathroom, dividing the space visually while maintaining the openness of the room can be tricky. Try changing the flooring between rooms like the kitchen and living area. If you are in a New York-style loft, raise the bedroom a foot or two by building a platform with steps up into the space. This gives the illusion of a separate room even though it is open to the rest of the unit. Make sure each space is defined clearly with your furnishings so there is no confusion as to what part of the loft is used for what purpose.

Younger audience

Finally, stage the home with a younger buyer in mind.

Lofts appeal to a younger, trendier demographic and those are the ones you will be selling too. Keep the decor modern.

This includes updating the lighting, which many sellers forget to do and using neutral colours both on the walls and in the furnishings.

Ryan DeLuca is a realtor with Sotheby's International Realty Canada, and host of The Real Estate Minute on Novus TV; rdeluca@sothebysrealty.ca.

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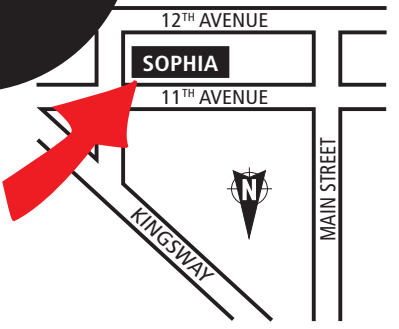

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Food

Spring (BBQ) cleaning: A leak test should be performed any time your barbecue has been in storage for a prolonged length of time. METRO NEWS SERVICES

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For complete leak test information, please visit napoleongrills.com to view the leak test video. Click on Customer Care and then Maintenance.

EDITOR: NINA DRAGICEVIC, NINA.DRAGICEVIC@METRONEWS.CA

Easy, cheesy and lazy lasagna

À la carte

Barb Holland

metronews.ca/alacarte

Statistics tell us that when it comes to what's really cooking in the kitchen, most of us have 10 to 15 recipes in our repertoire and rotate them ad nauseum. While this research may infer there is boredom in the kitchen, there's more to it than meets the frypan.

For one, this stat is "seasonally adjusted"; we serve up warm comfort food in winter, and prefer lighter fare, often grilling recipes in warm weather.

Finding recipes all the family will enjoy is one challenge, what with individual preferences, downright fussy eaters, vegetarian teens, and yes, let's not forget healthy and tasty. Then there is the issue of time — or rather the lack of it. According to those same statisticians, the average time spent preparing and cooking dinner is 30 minutes or less.

Organizational specialists suggest stocking the pantry and the freezer with a hoarding mentality. The reality is, you'll likely end up staring at shelves bulging with packages of rice, pasta and beans, or frozen hunks of meat, often in a Zen-like trance after a wild day at the office. While you may wish you had Captain Picard and his replicator to "make it so," what's needed are some short-order supper survival recipes with few ingredients and minimal time and effort.

Here's one of my supper survival recipes.

There's no need to pre-cook the noodles in this recipe.

Ever So Easy Lasagna

No need to cook the noodles. If you keep jars of pesto, sauce, tomatoes and noodles in the pantry and grated cheese in the freezer, the only thing to pick up is ricotta cheese. Serve with a vegetable sidedish or salad and crusty bread. Makes 4 to 6 servings.

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 - 19 oz (540 mL) can stewed or pasta tomatoes
- 1 cup (250 mL) pasta or spaghetti sauce
- 6 uncooked lasagna noodles
- 1 - 500 g container ricotta cheese
- 2 tbsp (30 mL) pesto
- 1 cup (250 mL) shredded mozzarella cheese
- 1/4 cup (60 mL) freshly grated Parmesan cheese

METHOD:

Combine tomatoes and sauce; spread one-third of mixture in 11 x 7 x 2 inch (2 L) glass microwaveable dish. Arrange three noodles over the sauce. Combine ricotta cheese and pesto; spread noodles with half the ricotta mixture. Top with another third of sauce.

Repeat with remaining three noodles, remaining ricotta mixture and sauce.

Cover with microwave plastic wrap, turning back one edge to vent. Microwave at High 10 minutes, rotate dish, and reduce to Medium (50 per cent) and cook for 10 minutes or until noodles are tender when pierced with a knife.

Sprinkle with cheeses, recover and let stand 10 minutes (this helps the noodles absorb liquid and the cheese melt).

Barb Holland is a professional home economist and food writer who believes in shopping locally and in season.

East meets West in Everyday Indian

In her new book, Everyday Indian: 100 Fast, Fresh, and Healthy Recipes, Bal Arneson introduces healthy, easy and delicious recipes that showcase the mouth-watering flavours of India.

Her cooking style is rooted in a small village in Punjab, Northern India, where she was raised. Equipped with the knowledge imparted to her by her mother and elders, Bal has created contemporary Indian recipes that use easily accessible ingredients, and can be prepared by any home cook. Metro got a hold of this recipe from the book:

Tandoori Quesadillas from the book Everyday Indian by Bal Arneson.

Tandoori Quesadillas

Every time I ate a Mexican enchilada I always wondered how it would taste if I filled it with tandoori chicken. So I went to the ethnic aisle of a local grocery store and bought myself a nice jar of tandoori paste, came home, tried this recipe, and loved it. So far, anyone who has tried these has absolutely loved them. Brad keeps hinting that he'll make this finger food himself and serve it with cold beer. I am still waiting for that day. Makes 18 pieces.

INGREDIENTS:

- 2 tbsp (30 ml) grapeseed oil
- 1 red onion, finely chopped
- 1 tbsp (15 ml) grated garlic
- 1 tbsp (15 ml) grated ginger
- ¼ cup (60 ml) tandoori paste
- 1 lb (450 g) boneless, skinless chicken breast cut into small bite-sized pieces
- ½ cup (120 ml) low-fat plain yogurt
- 6 large whole wheat tortillas
- ¾ cup (180 ml) grated mozzarella cheese

METHOD:

Place the oil in a non-stick skillet over medium heat and sauté the onion, garlic, and ginger for 3 minutes. Add the tandoori paste and cook for 1 minute. Add the chicken and cook until it's almost cooked through, about 8 minutes. Add the yogurt and cook until the chicken is completely cooked through, another 2 minutes.

Preheat the oven to 400°F. Place one tortilla on a baking sheet and spread one-third of the chicken mixture on it, spreading it evenly over the entire tortilla. Sprinkle ¼ cup of the mozzarella cheese overtop and cover with another tortilla. Repeat with the remaining ingredients. Bake until the cheese is melted, about 3 to 5 minutes. Cut into 6 wedges with a pizza cutter and serve with any of my chutneys (recipes available in the book, pages 28 to 35).

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LiquidAssets

Peter Rockwell

metronews.ca/liquidassets

Kiwi quaff

For me, the most pleasant surprise of the last few years has been the rise of New Zealand as an internationally respected producer of quality wines.

Maybe it's my affinity for the underdog or possibly the hope that if the Kiwis can steal the spotlight then someday so can we Canucks.

Better known as the backdrop for the Lord Of The Rings flicks, New Zealand would seem the least likely country to spin the wine world right round. Stranger still is that in a red wine market they were able to do it with premium-priced whites made with the Sauvignon Blanc grape.

It all comes back to the aforementioned quality and personalities like **Kim Crawford** whose **2007 Sauvignon Blanc ($19.95 - $21.99)** is a crazy good crowd pleaser with zesty lemon/lime flavours and a refreshingly tropical finish.

The gang at Coopers Creek inject a bit of humour into their **2007 Cat's Pee on a Gooseberry Bush Sauvignon Blanc ($13.55 - $17.83)** to balance out its namesake aromas (gooseberries often smell like kitty you-know-what) and soft, citrusy personality.

Both have great dining room versatility: Try with a big plate of oysters, any white meat, creamy pasta sauces or simply all by their lonesome.

Prices reflect the range across the country. Some products may not be available in all provinces.

Peter Rockwell is the everyman's wine writer, working in the liquor industry for more than 25 years and travelling the globe looking for something to fill his glass and put into words.

The French Connection
Starting April 20, Barbara-Jo's Books to Cooks takes its spring Social Club on a six-part journey through France, including an intimate dinner with chef Michel Roux and an Alsatian evening at Le Crocodile. $795 includes all meals, wine pairings and books. Call 604-688-6755 or visit bookstocooks.com. METRO NEWS SERVICES

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Dinner & drinks for 2: $90

Something old, something new, something borrowed and nothing blue is the well-sung mantra for chef Andrey Durbach and his business partner Chris Stewart. Which is why when the economy started to sing the blues, Durbach & Co instead went with Que Sera, Sera. In the blink of an eye, their high end Parkside restaurant became L'Altro Buca — an almost mirror image of their Kits trattoria.

The new bistro contains hints of the former Parkside menu and ambiance, but the price points and portions are pure rustic Italian. Fabulous quartinos of wine (think two well-filled glasses or three tastings) average at $14, mains hover around the low 20s, and the sirloin Fiorentina (a special) was $26 for almost a pound of perfectly cooked and parmigiano-coated meat, topped with crisp onion rings and wild arugula.

Another main, of bucatini pasta with salsiccia (fennel sausage), tomato sauce and mozzarella ($17.50), was signature Durbach — simply prepared and utterly delicious.

Ryan loved the fried rabbit over salad ($13) so much, he ordered it two nights in a row. The tiramisu ($6.95) completely converted me from my former "no-coffee-flavoured-desserts" stance. Grazie mille, maestro.

On the web

- Read the full article online at metronews.ca/vancouver/columnist/40411.
- Chew more on Anya's blog at metronews.ca/vancouver/blog/136310.

ANYA LEVYKH/FOR METRO VANCOUVER

Beef Fiorentina with arugula, parmigiano and onion rings.

Wine Fest Top Picks, Part 1

It was a busy week of tastings, winery dinners and flat-out boozing, but certain bottles, both local and international, rose to the top of the barrel. Stay tuned for more picks in the coming weeks. This week, we start with a Riesling icewine from local winery Inniskillin. It's a luscious, sweet quaff of peach and honey flavours with a nose of apricot, honey and more peach. Serve chilled with dessert. BCLS $35.02 for 200 ml.

At right: Inniskillin winemaker Sandor Mayor holds Riesling Icewine at wine fest.

ANYA LEVYKH/FOR METRO VANCOUVER

Dining out

CULINARY JOURNEYS
Yew Restaurant & Bar at the Four Seasons Hotel Vancouver is now offering a different three-course menu for $35 each month, showcasing various Four Season properties around the world. This month focuses on Japan's Four Seasons Chinzan. Visit fourseasons.com/vancouver for details.

MOTHER'S DAY SPECIALS
Fuel Restaurant (1944 West 4 Ave.) is offering a special one-day brunch for mothers on Sunday, May 10, from 11:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. Options include double-smoked bacon and egg sandwich, brioche French toast and rib eye steak and eggs. Call 604-288-7905 or visit fuelrestaurant.ca for more information.

In brief

IN A FEW short weeks, Gastropod Restaurant (1938 West 4 Ave.) will close and almost immediately re-open as Maenam, an authentic Thai eatery. Don't worry, chef/owner Angus An is still at the helm.

THE SEQUOIA GRILL in Stanley Park will soon be going back to its old moniker of The Teahouse as of next month. With chef Carol Chow on board, things are looking up.

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Vintage has new appeal
A not-so-new fashion trend is sweeping many parts of Australia, where thousands of people are flocking to vintage fairs to pick up unique, and inexpensive, apparel during the economic slowdown. REUTERS

Style

Yoga-inspired jewelry

Looking for a way to combine your love of yoga and fashionable jewelry? Try the Om Jewels line created by certified yoga instructor Dina Vieira. It features pendants in silver, gold and birthstone collections, all including the two powerful symbols of om and lotus. A best seller is the silver lotus pendant, left, $110. Om Jewels are available across Canada, and can be purchased online at omjewels.com. METRO NEWS SERVICES

EDITOR: ANN-MARIE.COLACINO@METRONEWS.CA

Get your yellow on

Celebrate this season's colour with sunny accessories

SunnySide

Here comes the sun. Little darlin' — it's been a long, cold, lonely winter.

And while the weather forecaster can't predict what the next few weeks will bring, colour forecasters are declaring there will be bright skies and warm afternoons.

Mimosa — think Provence as painted by Van Gogh — is the hottest colour for spring, say the execs at the Pantone Color Institute.

Bright sunny yellow clothing, accessories, home decor and even bath products are lighting up shelves and racks right now.

"From a retailing standpoint, it has the highest visibility and in a sluggish economy that is a good thing. It means sunlight and good cheers, that's what we are drawn to," says Leatrice Eiseman, executive director of the Institute.

The popularity of yellow is no accident.

Pantone, the company that considers itself a global authority on colour, announced late last year that they selected Mimosa, the sunny colour of that champagne and orange juice cocktail, or to be exact, Pantone 14-0848, as the colour of 2009. They declared, "That in a time of economic uncertainty and political change, optimism is paramount and no other colour expresses hope and reassurance more than yellow."

And U.S. First Lady Michelle Obama, now considered a fashion icon, was on trend when she radiated a warm and fuzzy glow on inauguration day by wearing a sunny Isabel Toledo-designed Swiss wool lace ensemble.

As the designer told the New York Times, "I wanted to pick a very optimistic colour that had sunshine. I wanted her to feel charmed, and in that way would charm everybody else."

Despite the yellow fever, some will not warm to the colour.

"A lot of women shy away from it — it's a difficult colour to wear so it's crucial to find the right shade," says Robin Keeler, fashion director at Yorkdale Mall in Toronto, Ont. "I always say, there is good reason why yellow is used in caution and warning signs!"

There are simple rules, says Keeler. One of the general rules is to go by hair colour. Dark-haired women look best in the yellow hues that are vivid. Blonds and light browns suit the softer, more muted shades and redheads should opt for gold or honey hues.

Keeler does note, however, that almost anyone can wear a single accessory, like a bag, shoe or bracelet. "It's like a jolt — it brings newness and freshness to a look."

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Beaded necklace, Reitmans, $18

Linen tunic, Talbots, $98

Python print patent belt, Winners, $24.99

Floral yellow scarf, Gap, $29.50

Liz Claiborne yellow leather Olivia flats, $99, The Bay

RIGHT: Patent leather slingback, Geox, $150, visit geox.com.

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TORSTAR FILE PHOTO

Cheri Milaney design.

Canada caters to curves

In Cheri Milaney's list of 10 fashion commandments, Love Thy Muffintop ranks right up there.

The Vancouver fashion designer, who caters to curves, is on a mission to help women celebrate their bodies, bulging midriff and all.

At Toronto Fashion Week last month, she was the only designer to show samples in size 14, which is actually the average fit for Canadian women.

"I'm hoping we're going to change people's perceptions," Milaney says. "I'm hoping the industry will start taking notice and have some realistic expectations of what beauty should be."

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

In brief

NEW COLLECTION British designer Matthew Williamson brings his trademark bohemian prints to H&M stores worldwide on April 23 when his capsule collection for the brand hits 200 stores. We're predicting this maxi dress, which will look good on pretty much anyone, will be the first to sell out.

METRO WORLD NEWS

FlareFashion

Lisa Tant

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Designer threads for the masses

Sung partners with Zellers for spring collection

PATRICIA D'CUNHA
for Metro Canada

The new Alfred Sung Pure clothing line hits Zellers stores tomorrow. The collection includes cotton solid Bermuda shorts (above) in multi-plaid, black, white, green, orange and pink at $22.97 each.

Alfred Sung cotton rose-print "Soho" dress, available at Zellers for $34.97.

For women, it can sometimes be difficult to find sensibly-priced fashion that's timeless, feminine and versatile.

And while designer labels can offer impeccable style, the steep prices are out-of-reach for the average consumer — that is, until now.

Following on the heels of other high-end designers-gone-accessible — think Christian Siriano and Patricia Fields for Payless Shoe Source — Canadian fashion icon Alfred Sung has partnered with Zellers to make his styles more available to the masses.

The Alfred Sung Pure clothing line will debut Friday (in about 300 Zellers stores) with the spring/summer collection and more pieces introduced each season.

Tamara Mimran, business development manager at Alfred Sung, says it's a "lifestyle collection," in that it's for the everyday woman whose day doesn't end at 5 p.m. "It's really (for) all the areas of her life," adds Mimran. The collection is also accessible to women of all body shapes. The pants and skirts are available in sizes two to 16, with tops, jackets and dresses offered in extra-small to extra-large.

"Pure is all about great design at accessible price points," explains Carrie Kirkman, manager of women's wear at Zellers, adding that it offers stylish essentials that are great for the season. And, with prices ranging from just $12.97 to $39.97, building a new wardrobe is affordable.

The collection has different blouse types, pleated, flowy and pencil skirts, sleek straight-leg pants, three-quarter-length cardigans and tailored dresses, and it draws on the colours and fabrics of the season.

"(Sung) based his colour palate on something that's fresh and optimistic," says Mimran. The colour palate has the classic black and white, but also adds in bold colours of orange, fuchsia and citrus-green.

Sung uses cotton blends, such as cotton-voile and cotton-poplin, in particular, for the dresses, skirts and blouses. "A lot of the fabrications are natural, and they're nice and airy for the summer," says Mimran. Another material used in the collection is bamboo, which she says was chosen because it makes clothing feel softer. The cotton-bamboo-spandex blend is offered in a three-quarter-length sleeve knit top and a tank top, both with a scoop neck.

"(Sung) based his colour palate on something that's fresh and optimistic."
Tamara Mimran, Alfred Sung

Some of the punchy pieces in the collection include the ginkgo black and white skirt, the bow blouse with the poppy print and the orange-fuchsia "Soho" rose-print dress. "(Sung) loved the combination this season for the fuchsia and orange together," says Mimran.

The line also has the "perfect shirt," a cotton-poplin stretch that comes in five different colourways of candy-stripes, as well as black and white. Priced at $22.97, Kirkman says it is a "crisp, tailored shirt (that) works for the office or the weekend."

Kirkman says the collection has "simple, easy to pull together looks." One of her favourite items includes the black "key-hole" dress, priced at $34.97. "It's modern and so versatile, the perfect little black dress that's always a chic staple in any woman's wardrobe," she explains.

The spring/summer collection also has accessories, such as bags and sterling-silver jewellery, available at select stories, but Mimran says they are looking to make a larger impact with those items in the fall.

FlareFashion

Lisa Tant

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Simpsons go postal

Bart Simpson and the rest of his fun and dysfunctional family will be paid tribute by the U.S. Postal Service, which is rolling out five 44-cent stamps in honor of primetime's longest-running comedy's 2009 20th anniversary. **PEOPLE.COM**

Entertainment

Best dressed

Mark Ronson has been voted Britain's best dressed man in a poll by GQ magazine. He beat out Guy Ritchie and Tom Ford to the title as they took second and third place. **FEMALEFIRST.CO.UK**

EDITOR: DEAN.LISK@METRONEWS.CA

●●●●● A CLASSIC; ●●●● EXCELLENT; ●●● GOOD; ●● FAIR; ● POOR

Quiet Nights with Diana Krall

Diana **Krall**

Album: Quiet Nights
Label: Verve/Universal
Rating: ●●●

DIANA KRALL'S NOBLE attempt to test the waters as a songwriter (with the help of hubby Elvis Costello) was welcomed by her fans with all the warmth of broken wind on a long-haul elevator ride. It seems the fans would rather have her seductively request a peeled grape than explore the outer edges of her art. So here we have it, more gentle bossanovas and peeled grapes. And why not? It's impossible to get enough of the way Krall and her band play these lovely gems from the '50s and '60s. Only the best known writers are represented — Rogers and Hart (Where Or When), Mercer and Whiting (Too Marvelous For Words); Hal David and Burt Bacharach (Walk On By) and of course, Antonio Carlos Jobim (The Boy From Impanema).

Graham Rockingham/for Metro Canada

UNIVERSAL MUSIC

Diana Krall is at her seductive best playing gems from the '50s and '60s on latest album Quiet Nights.

Peter **Doherty**

Album: Grace/Wasteland
Label: EMI
Rating: ●●●½

IT'S AMAZING Doherty can pick up a guitar considering how drugged he always seems to be, but when he does he makes great music. His debut solo album is easily the troubled artist's best work. Gone are the middling Clash-like sounds of the Libertines, instead Kate Moss' ex churns out a heartfelt collection of varied acoustic tracks. There's blues (Arcadie), jangly rock (Last of the English), and even old-timey jazz on Sweet By and By. Let's hope this new, more mature sound is a permanent thing for Doherty, because he's finally getting his act together.

Bryan Borzykowski/for Metro Canada

Thunderheist

Album: Thunderheist
Label: Big Dada/Outisde
Rating: ●●●

TORONTO DANCE DUO Thunderheist has been building a steady following for months, but it's this debut full-length that will make them or force them back to the drawing board. The self-titled album will likely do the former, though they still have work to do if they really want to make it big on the international club scene. The disc is loaded with infectious '90s electro sounds, monotone hip-hop lyrics and some fantastic beats. The problem, however, is that it's too repetitive; by the mid-way point fans will start to lose focus. Still, these two have tons of talent.

Bryan Borzykowski/for Metro Canada

Music**Reviews**

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On the web

There's more online at metronews.ca/music:

- Reviews of discs by Leonard Cohen, Keith Urban, Yeah Yeah Yeahs and links to this week's music.

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to be revealed on

Star Strek sequel in the works

A Star Trek movie sequel has been confirmed by Paramount Pictures — a month before the first is released in cinemas. J. J. Abrams has not yet confirmed if he will be on board as the director of the second instalment. FEMALEFIRST.CO.UK

ER drawing last breath

Groundbreaking drama bids farewell after 15-year run

Groundbreaking hospital drama ER draws its last breath this week after 15 years of blood, sweat and tears that changed story-telling on U.S. television and put fictional County General Hospital on the world's stage.

Today's two-hour season finale on the NBC network, preceded by a retrospective special, brings to an end a drama series that nearly never got made, yet boosted the careers of stars including George Clooney and won 22 Emmy awards, U.S. television's top honour.

But just as the fast-paced ER episodes over the years left many stories unresolved, viewers should not expect a neat ending or grand emotional farewell with many former stars appearing on the final show.

Clooney, who left the show in 1999, and other ER alumni including Julianna Margulies, Anthony Edwards, Eriq La Salle and Noah Wyle appeared earlier in this 15th and final season.

"We've spread them out over the season," Executive Producer John Wells, who wrote the finale, told Entertainment Weekly magazine. "I didn't want to do something like somebody dies, or there is a celebration, or the hospital closes, so that's why everybody comes back (during the season). I wanted it to be natural."

Author Michael Crichton, who died of cancer last year, wrote the screenplay for ER in 1974 based on his experiences as a medical student in a busy hospital emergency department.

But it went nowhere until Crichton worked with director Steven Spielberg on the 1993 film Jurassic Park, and later the two turned their attention to a TV pilot that eventually aired on NBC in September 1994.

ER's frenetic pace, complex medical jargon and multi-stranded plots were at odds with the self-contained medical mystery format used on most prior hospital TV shows.

But the format and characters played well to audiences. Between 1995 and 1999, ER was the top-rated drama on U.S. television.

It also has played in 195 countries in Europe, Africa, Asia and South America and has been dubbed or sub-titled in 22 languages.

"We were in Kenya, in Nairobi, in the airport and everyone knew who I was," said ER actress Alex Kingston at a Hollywood party celebrating the show. "It was kind of strange, but that's just how big the show is." REUTERS

JASON MERRITT/GETTY IMAGES

Former ER actor Noah Wyle attends the popular NBC show's recent finale party in Hollywood.

"We were in Kenya, in Nairobi, in the airport and everyone knew who I was."
ER's Alex Kingston on the show's universal appeal

Busy Franco turns down major offer

PEOPLE James Franco is so much in demand that the actor is reluctantly saying no to some of the biggest movie projects in town.

Franco is in final negotiations to star opposite Danny McBride in Your Highness, a comedy for Universal that David Gordon Green is shooting in the summer in Northern Ireland.

He also was in talks to join Leonardo DiCaprio in Warner Bros.' Inception, a sci-fi thriller from Dark Knight writer-director Christopher Nolan. But on Tuesday, it became evident that the timetable would not work out because Inception also is scheduled to shoot in the summer.

Franco has an offer as well for a role opposite Julia Roberts in Eat Pray Love, a drama at Columbia, though it's unclear how that project would fit into his schedule.

On Highness, Franco would reteam with his co-star and director of Pineapple Express, last year's action comedy that grossed $87 million. Highness, written by Ben Best and McBride, centres on an arrogant, lazy prince (McBride) who must complete a quest to save his father's kingdom.

Franco

Franco would play McBride's more heroic brother, who joins the prince on the quest.

However his to-do list shakes out, Franco is on a hot streak, in sharp contrast to where he stood just a few years ago. Although he drew good notices for his work in the Spider-Man movies, such films as Annapolis, Flyboys and In the Valley of Elah did not get traction with audiences or critics.

Things changed in the summer with Pineapple Express, which paired Franco with Seth Rogen and McBride and earned him a Golden Globe nomination. In the fall, he co-starred in the awards favorite Milk. REUTERS

VA	Vu	SC	C	7:00	7:30	8:00	8:30	9:00	9:30	10:00	10:30	11:00
primetime 4/2/09	251	308	3 CBC	Coronation St.	Jeopardy! (N)	Doc Zone (N) (CC)		Doc Zone "Porndemic" (N)		CBC News: The National (N)		(:05) The Hour
	255	358	6 JOY	E! News (N)	The Insider	Name Is Earl	Name Is Earl	My Fabulous Gay Wedding		Party Monsters: Cabo (CC)		News (N)
	254	-	8 M	Two/Half Men	Two/Half Men	Omni News: Mandarin Edition		News: Cantonese Edition		Omni News: Punjabi Edition		Metropia
	250	321	9 CTV	etalk (CC)	Hollywood	CSI: Crime Scene Invstgtn.		ER Gates treats a young teen with alcohol poisoning. (CC)				News (N)
	-	-	10 OMNI	The Daily	Frasier (CC)	Smallville "Eternal" (N) (CC)		Supernatural (N) (CC)		Scrubs (CC)	Diya (CC)	New Day
	252	336	11 GTV	Entertainment	ET Canada	Survivor: Tocantins (N) (CC)		The Office	Kink in Hair	Life "Initiative 38" (N) (CC)		News (N)
	256	389	12 VI	Instant Star	TMZ (N) (CC)	Old Christine	Samantha	America's Next Top Model		Private Practice (CC)		News (N)
	253	359	13 CITY	Law & Order: SVU		In Motherhood	Friends (CC)	Hell's Kitchen (N) (PA) (CC)		Privileged (CC)		The List
	-	-	14 CW	Deal-No Deal	Deal-No Deal	Smallville "Eternal" (N) (CC)		Supernatural (N) (CC)		Seinfeld	Seinfeld	Frasier (CC)
	289	381	15 CBS	Entertainment	The Insider	Survivor: Tocantins (N) (CC)		CSI: Crime Scene Invstgtn.		(:01) Eleventh Hour "Medea"		News (N)
	287	379	16 NBC	Evening Mag.	Inside Edition	ER "Retrospective" (N) (CC)		ER Gates treats a young teen with alcohol poisoning. (CC)				News (N)
	602	568	19 W	Will & Grace	Friends (CC)	Divine Design	House	Confidential	House	Divine Design	Love It-List It	House
	288	380	21 ABC	Wheel-Fortune	Jeopardy! (N)	In Motherhood	Samantha	Grey's Anatomy (CC)		(:02) Private Practice (CC)		KOMO 4 News
	-	-	23 KVOS	M*A*S*H	Seinfeld	Physical Evidence ★ (1989) Burt Reynolds, Theresa Russell.				King	Still Standing	Scrubs (CC)
	291	383	27 PBS	Steves Europe	Field Guide	Doc Martin "In Loco" (CC)		Poirot "The King of Clubs"		Richard Bangs' Adventures		Alone
	290	382	28 FOX	Two/Half Men	Two/Half Men	Bones (N) (CC)		Hell's Kitchen (N) (PA) (CC)		News (N) (CC)		Family Guy
	-	364	45 PBS	MI-5 "Looking After Our Own"		Red Green	Summer Wine	Tavis Smiley	Charlie Rose (N) (CC)		This Old Hse.	Yankee Shop
	296	654	64 SBK	Frasier (CC)	Frasier (CC)	Punk'd (CC)	South Park	Cheers (CC)	Half & Half	Paid Program	Family Court	Paid Program
	298	653	65 TLA	Two/Half Men	Two/Half Men	Smallville "Eternal" (N) (CC)		Supernatural (N) (CC)		KTLA Prime News (CC)		Friends (CC)
	295	651	66 WGN	WGN News at Nine (N) (CC)		Family Guy	Two/Half Men	According-Jim	Sex and-City	Friends (CC)	Friends (CC)	My Wife-Kids
	297	652	67 WPX	PIX News at Ten Tong. (N)		Two/Half Men	Friends (CC)	Sex and-City	According-Jim	Frasier (CC)	Frasier (CC)	Odd Couple
	199	311	76 STR	News (N)			Late Show-Letterman		Janice Dickinson Modeling		Late Late Show	
news	502	390	26 NW	Geologic Journey Hurricanes.		CBC News: The National (N)		CBC News: The National		Geologic Journey Hurricanes.		National
	500	500	33 CNN	Anderson Cooper 360 (CC)				Larry King Live		Anderson Cooper 360 (CC)		Cooper 360
sports	407	419	22 RSP	NHL Hockey Anaheim Ducks at Vancouver Canucks. (Subject to Blackout)					Sportsnet	Sportsnet Connected (Live)		Sportsnet
	400	400	30 TSN	SportsCentre	That's Hockey	SportsCentre	Off the Record	Score Golf	UEFA Weekly	2008 World Series of Poker		SportsCentre
	411	457	49 OLN	Bounty Hunter	Bounty Hunter	Survivorman (CC)		Mantracker "Brent and Brian"		Bounty Hunter	Bounty Hunter	Survivorman
	410	403	50 SCR	Basketball	NBA Basketball Utah Jazz at Denver Nuggets. (Subject to Blackout) (Live)					Final Score	Final Score	Final Score
	417	406	55 SC	Bullrun (N)		Pimp My Ride	Pass Time	Pinks -- All Out		Bullrun		F1 Racing
	416	409	144 GLF	Fútbol: Italia vs. Irlanda		Footballers	Extra Time		Gol TV News	Gol TV News	Extra Time	Gol TV News
family	552	543	25 YTV	True Jackson	H2O, Just Add	Malcolm-Mid.	Futurama	In Real Life "Auto Racing"		Falcon Beach "The Next Life"		Mystery Hnt.
	555	545	60 TEL	Totally Spies	Total Drama	6TEEN	6TEEN	Futurama	Team America:	World Police ★★★ (2004) Matt Stone (CC)		
	557	541	61 FAM	Wizards-Place	Han. Montana	Zack & Cody	Latest Buzz	Wizards-Place	Life Derek	Ned's School	Cory in House	Zack & Cody
	553	546	63 TRE	Comfy Couch	Zigby	Max & Ruby	Babar (CC)	Backyard	Dora-Explorer	Go, Diego, Go!	Franklin	Comfy Couch
cable variety	268	354	5 KNO	Recreat. Eden	Big Ideas	Francesco's Italy: Top to Toe		Broadway: Musical		The Genius of Photography		N. Pole-NYC
	575	583	20 CMT	Hope & Faith	Hope & Faith	Coyote Ugly	Coyote Ugly	Home Imp.	Home Imp.	Reba (CC)	Reba (CC)	Hope & Faith
	570	580	24 MM	Instant Star	Instant Star	Video on Trial	Video on Trial	Paris Hilton's British Friend		Video on Trial	Technical Diff.	Spotlight
	600	564	25 H&G	House	House	Holmes on Homes (CC)		Disaster DIY	Big Amazing	Holmes on Homes (CC)		House
	615	520	31 A&E	The First 48 (CC)		The Beast "Capone" (CC)		The First 48 (CC)		The First 48 (CC)		The First 48
	628	584	32 SPKE	(6:00) TNA Wrestling (N)		The Ultimate Fighter		MANswers	GameTrailers	MANswers	MANswers	MXC
	521	560	34 TLC	Heli-Loggers (N) (CC)		David Blaine: Street Magic		Heli-Loggers (CC)		Overhaulin' "All in the Family"		Overhaulin'
	616	522	53 SHO	The Outer Limits (CC)		Love-Death	Love-Death	Trailer Park	Trailer Park	The Fast and the Furious ★★ (2001) (CC)		
	620	523	70 BVO	Ballet High (N)	Pater Noster	Law & Order "Shrunk" (CC)		Without a Trace "At Rest"		Who Is Cletis Tout? ★★ (2001) (CC)		
	601	562	41 SLC	X-Weighted "Chris" (CC)		ET Canada	Til Debt-Part	Real Housewives OC		Trading Spouses		Paradise Hotel
	520	505	42 DIS	MythBusters "Trail Blazers"		Daily Planet (CC)		Deadliest Catch (CC)		Mega Heist Near perfect crimes. (CC)		
	522	506	44 HIS	NCIS "The Meat Puzzle"		Ancient Discoveries (CC)		Go Deep "Ports" (CC)		NCIS "The Meat Puzzle"		Sea Hunters
	627	528	45 SPC	Chuck (CC)		Stargate SG-1 (CC)		Star Trek: Next Gener.		Star Trek: Voyager (CC)		Star Trek: Ent.
	294	650	57 TBS	(6:00) Happy Gilmore ★★		Sex and-City	Sex and-City	(:10) Happy Gilmore ★★ (1996, Comedy) Adam Sandler. (CC)				Bruce & Lloyd
	619	525	48 TROP	Vanity	Inside Hollywood (CC)		Seinfeld	Seinfeld	Raymond	Family Guy	Married... With	Seinfeld
	603	561	52 FN	Ace of Cakes	Ace of Cakes	Chef Abroad	David Rocco	Unwrapped	Unwrapped	Chef Jeff Project (CC)		Ace of Cakes
	626	547	57 COM	Air Farce	Just for Laughs (CC)		Corner Gas	The Simpsons	South Park	VIP	House Party	Daily Show
	320	621	60 CEN	That Beautiful Somewhere		Diminished Capacity ★★ (2008) Premiere.			Sex and the City ★★★ (2008) Sarah Jessica Parker. (CC)			
	581	566	101 MTV	Taking the Stage (N) (CC)		MTV Live	After	From G's to Gents (CC)		Taking the Stage (CC)		MTV Live
	261	394	102 V	Daily Weekend Edition (N)		Decoding Christianity		Matthew Matthew recalls the life of Jesus.			Recreat. Eden	Paid Program
	-	-	106 MUL	Eight Heroes	Mom's-Upset	Vancouver	Kahkashan	Dheeyan Ghar	Sadabahar	Rang Barangi	Desi Rhythms	Patrol World

critics'corner

ER

Alexis Bledel ("Gilmore Girls") and Ernest Borgnine guest star in the series finale, which finds Gates (John Stamos) treating a teen for alcohol poisoning following a dangerous drinking game. Old friends come to show their support when Dr. Carter (Noah Wyle) opens a medical facility for the underprivileged. Sam (Linda Cardellini) gets a special birthday gift. 9 PM on CTV

Unmasking the Pagan Christ

A response to, but not an attack on, Tom Harpur's "Pagan Christ," this new documentary, based on a book by Stanley Porter and Stephen Bedard, argues that Harpur's theory that Jesus never existed is wrong. Scholars from a variety of backgrounds offer their support for the idea that Jesus was a real historical figure. Like the documentary based on Harpur's book, this has plenty of food for thought. 6 PM on V

Stars sign up for Clash of the Titans

FILM Mads Mikkelsen, Gemma Arterton and Alexa Davalos are joining the cast of Clash of the Titans, the Greek-god epic being directed by Louis Leterrier. Sam Worthington stars as Perseus, who embarks on a quest to save a princess and defeat Hades, the god of hell. Matt Manfredi and Phil Hay wrote the script. The Warner Bros./Legendary Pictures project will begin lensing in the U.K. at the end of April. REUTERS

Kenya's Style

Kenya Hunt

Read the blog at metronews.ca/kenyasstyle

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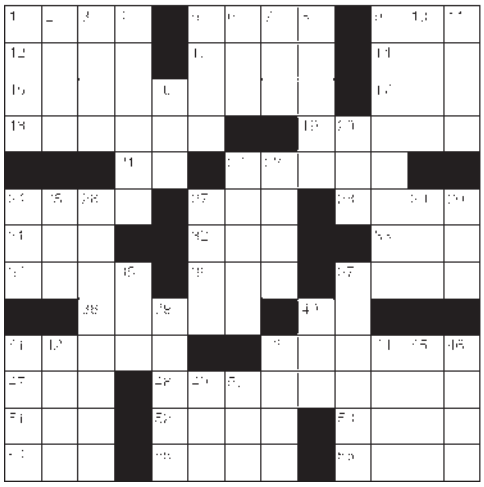


Crossword across

1 "Star Trek" speed factor
5 Cribbage props
9 Upper limit
12 Largest of the seven
13 Penetrating wind?
14 Time of your life
15 Hangout for game fans
17 Greek consonants
18 Off the track
19 YouTube offering
21 On the other hand
22 Ask
24 Humorous utterance
27 Sickness cause
28 Black, in verse
31 Dadaist artist
32 Have a 27-Across
33 Exist
34 Boyfriend
36 Pigpen
37 Staff, at sea
38 "— Clown" (George Carlin album)
40 Scale member
41 Nutritionists' recommendations
43 Power failure
47 Plagiarize
48 Cyclist's mustache?
51 Schedule abbr.
52 "Zounds!"
53 Piratic quaffs
54 1940s headline word
55 Weeps loudly
56 Undo a dele

Crossword down

1 "There once — man from ..."
2 Uraei
3 Laugh-a-minute
4 Mimicry specialist
5 Bouquet
6 Undergo recession
7 — long way
8 Do the duty
9 Hershey product
10 Malaria symptom
11 Mexican money
16 Pitch
20 Rage
22 Gives up
23 In pre-swan mode
24 Poke
25 Previous to
26 It's below ZX-CVBNM
27 Low-voiced
29 Raw rock
30 Fresh
35 Last (Abbr.)
37 Provides provender
39 McCourt's "Angela's —"
40 Suffix with cup or cap
41 Carey or Barrymore
42 Speck
43 Probability
44 Touch
45 Up for it
46 Formerly, formerly
49 Past
50 Apprehend

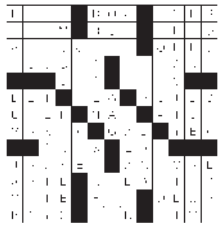
Sudoku

For more/less challenging Sudoku puzzles, visit metronews.ca

HOW TO PLAY: Digits 1 through 9 will appear once in each zone – one zone is an outlined 3x3 grid within the larger puzzle grid. There are nine zones in the puzzle. Do not enter a digit into a box if it already appears elsewhere in the same zone, row across or column down the entire puzzle.

	9		7		2		5	
7			4		5			8
	4			1			2	
		6				3		
5	1						9	4
		8				7		
	8			7			3	
2			1		3			6
	3		8		9		4	

PREVIOUS DAY'S CROSSWORD AND SUDOKU ANSWERS:



6	9	2	3	4	8	7	5	1
4	7	8	5	2	1	3	6	9
5	1	3	6	7	9	4	8	2
9	6	5	4	1	3	8	2	7
7	2	1	8	5	6	9	3	4
3	8	4	2	9	7	5	1	6
8	5	9	1	6	4	2	7	3
1	3	7	9	8	2	6	4	5
2	4	6	7	3	5	1	9	8

Find today's answers + play more games at metronews.ca

SUDOKU SOLVE TIME:

Under 13 min .....Genius
13-17 min.....Scholar
17-21 min .....Smart
21-25 min.....Not bad
25+ min.....Keep practising

Metro Recipe of the Day

Rice Pilaf with Dried Fruits and Almonds

INGREDIENTS:

12 dried apricot halves
1 tbsp (15 ml) margarine
1 medium onion, chopped
1 cup (250 ml) jasmine or white rice
1/4 tsp (1 ml) ground cardamom
Salt to taste
1/4 tsp (1 ml) pepper
2 1/2 cups (625 ml) chicken or vegetable broth
1/2 cup (125 ml) golden raisins
1/3 cup (75 ml) slivered almonds, toasted

METHOD:

1. Snip apricots into small slivers with kitchen shears
2. Melt margarine in large pot over medium heat. Sauté onion, rice, cardamom, salt and pepper until rice is toasted, 8 minutes.
3. Stir in broth, raisins, almonds and apricots and bring to boil. Reduce heat to medium-low. Cover and simmer until broth is absorbed, 25 minutes. Remove from heat and let stand 5 minutes. Fluff with fork and serve.

SERVES 4

rd.ca
For nutritional information on this and other great recipes, go to rd.ca or check out Key Ingredients in this month's Reader's Digest, on newsstands now!

Horoscopes

AVATAR VENUS

ARIES ♈
MARCH 21-APRIL 20
You made a strong impression on a nitwit. Don't try to fool anyone about making the best of things. Give your support but avoid a battle.

TAURUS ♉
APRIL 21-MAY 21
Tell the truth to eliminate depression. Arrange your time to include rest stops. Better days are coming.

GEMINI ♊
MAY 22-JUNE 21
Roll up your sleeves and tackle a tough job. A trusted person will be free with cash. Don't be led astray by delays.

CANCER ♋
JUNE 22-JULY 22
A missing person has a mysterious adventure. A friend tries to control how things work out. An unexpected sum of money is coming.

LEO ♌
JULY 23-AUG 23
A gullible person will be rebuked. False friends have issues about property. Dealing with ignorance is enlightening.

VIRGO ♍
AUG 24-SEPT 22
Don't act in a high-handed manner. A generous person struggles with a lousy offer. A teenager needs to smarten up.

LIBRA ♎
SEPT 23-OCT 23
A girl is afraid of a flaming romance. A wasteful situation is about to end. A non-conformist influences serious matters.

SCORPIO ♏
OCT 24-NOV 22
Longing for a distant person will diminish. Nerves are jangling due to someone's request. Bravado sweeps away disappointment.

SAGITTARIUS ♐
NOV 23-DEC 21
Financial reality gets in your way. A distasteful scene puts your teeth on edge. A woman is shocked by having fresh opportunities.

CAPRICORN ♑
DEC 22-JAN 20
A non-judgmental elder sorts things out. Refuse to be concerned about a shrieking woman. Trust is an issue for those who drink to excess.

AQUARIUS ♒
JAN 21-FEB 18
You need no excuse to make a stimulating change. Be affectionate but don't talk too much. A winning ticket brings benefits.

PISCES ♓
FEB 19-MARCH 20
A rowdy guy whines about cruelty. Pay attention to a charismatic female. An honest man is stumbling in the dark.

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Karl's country retreat

Karl Lagerfeld is fresh from a shoot for Chanel's autumn/winter campaign in Vermont, where he got in touch with his rural side. He tells WWD: "It was very cold, the sky was blue and the light was stunning. And the people are so nice." METRO NEWS SERVICES

Celebrity Buzz

Jennifer a hair-raising diva?

PEOPLE Jennifer Aniston's hair seems to be making more headlines for the Friends star than her acting. The latest news is that Jen refused to start shooting her new film as she was not happy with how her hair looked, femalefirst.co.uk reports.

Aniston shocked the cast and crew on her new film The Baster by asking for more time to get ready on her first day on the set, the website adds.

A source told America's OK! magazine: "In the morning everyone had to wait to start filming because Jennifer asked for extra time to finishing blow-drying her hair."

METRO NEWS SERVICES

Marry me or I'm leaving: Brad

RUMOUR While they've growing their family for years, sources say Brad Pitt has had enough. According to OK! Magazine, he's issued Angelina Jolie an ultimatum.

"Brad's told her, 'Marry me, or it's over,'" a source tells the magazine. "He definitely wants to get married before they have any more babies," another source adds.

What's the beef? Sources say Pitt's been feeling "stressed out" taking care of the family while Jolie pursues her film and humanitarian work.

METRO WORLD NEWS

Mimi's 40th 'anniversary' getaway

BIRTHDAY Continuing their tradition of taking lavish vacations together, Nick Cannon whisked his wife of almost one year, Mariah Carey, away to Barbados via private jet Wednesday evening to celebrate her 40th, people.com reports.

On the day of her birthday, Cannon pulled off a private, 11-person dinner party at Barbados' ritzy Wispers on the Bay restaurant Friday night, filling the restaurant with hundreds of pink and lavender-hued balloons. The affectionate couple and their friends shared laughs and bottles of Dom Perignon, along with Carey's favourite dessert — yellow cake with chocolate frosting flown in from New York — while a live band played.

For her main course, the birthday girl noshed on salmon with a cranberry and vodka white wine butter sauce, sautéed asparagus, and lemon scented herbal rice, while other guests enjoyed lamb and angus beef with horseradish cream and tomato duxelle.

"Because she's been working extremely hard for the past few months recording new music for the album, it was important to Nick that the trip be a very relaxing one, where Mariah and her friends could truly enjoy themselves," says a source, noting Cannon wanted to plan "the most romantic and beautiful vacation possible" to celebrate Carey's 40th "anniversary."

METRO NEWS SERVICES

David takes a family break

FAMILY American Idol champ David Cook hopes to return to his tour later this week after cancelling two shows "to deal with personal family matters," people.com reports.

The singer did not elaborate in the announcement posted on his Web site. But Cook's brother Adam has been battling brain cancer for over a decade, and Cook's rep tells People that David spent time with Adam last week.

METRO NEWS SERVICES

Miley explains onstage cryfest

PEOPLE Miley Cyrus has ripped into cynical critics who questioned her tears at the Kids' Choice Awards on Saturday, but admits she's embarrassed about losing her cool at the ceremony, femalefirst.co.uk reports.

The star sobbed as she accepted her favourite female singer honour, and insists she really was overcome with emotion when her name was announced.

She tells MTV News, "I was a little embarrassed ... (but) it meant something to me, because it's from the kids and the kids are more important than anything else in the world. So it made me happy."

Cyrus has also vowed that she won't end up like Britney Spears or Lindsay Lohan.

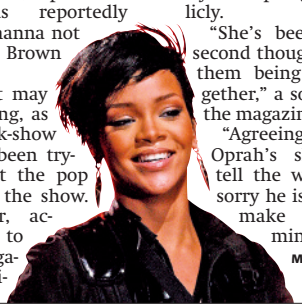
"The last thing I ever want to do is disappoint my parents," she tells Glamour. "My mom's dad died when she was 18, and if something ever happened to one of my parents, I'd want them to go knowing I made them proud. I think it's selfish to go out partying all the time, especially if you have little ones (in your family). I have a nine-year-old sister, and I don't want her to go to school and have people make fun of her for it."

METRO NEWS SERVICES

Rihanna to reunite with Chris on Oprah?

PEOPLE After the initial fallout between Rihanna and Chris Brown, Oprah Winfrey was reportedly telling Rihanna not to take Brown back.

But that may be changing, as the talk-show host has been trying to get the pop singer on the show.



However, according to Look magazine, Rihanna will only do it if Brown is by her side and ready to apologize publicly.

"She's been having second thoughts about them being back together," a source tells the magazine.

"Agreeing to go on Oprah's show and tell the world how sorry he is will help make up her mind."

METRO WORLD NEWS

Bruno's Live Aid spoof

MUSIC Bono and Chris Martin have teamed up for a song which mocks Live Aid, femalefirst.co.uk reports.

The pair — both keen charity campaigners who were instrumental in getting together Band Aid 20 for their charity cover of Do They Know It's Christmas? — appear on Dove Of Peace, taken from Sacha Baron Cohen's latest movie Bruno.

Studio insiders say Bono and Chris were so amused by lyrics to the fashion-spoof song — which include, "For people of Africa who live in Hell/ They will never wear Chanel" — they were almost unable to record their lines.

A source told Britain's Daily Mirror newspaper: "Chris Martin was laughing throughout the recording and only just managed to get his lines out.

"Sacha's character releases a brilliantly cheesy but subversive single — Dove Of Peace — which mocks the likes of Band Aid. It runs close to the bone but it's very tongue-in-cheek."

Singer Sting is also due to record a part of the song, while Baron Cohen friend Madonna has been approached as well.

METRO NEWS SERVICES

Caine dishes on Heath and Christian

PEOPLE Michael Caine, who played Batman's butler in The Dark Knight, is thrilled by the late Heath Ledger's Academy Award win for playing The Joker, "stunned" by Christian Bale's infamous on-set outburst, and hopes for another sequel, people.com says.

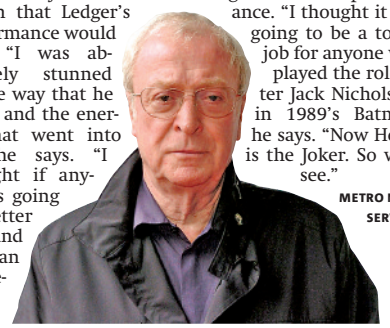
"I'm so pleased," the 76-year-old tells People of the posthumous Oscar given to Ledger. "I thought that it was very important for his family as well. I was a big fan of his from the first time that I met him."

Caine says he had a hunch that Ledger's performance would win. "I was absolutely stunned by the way that he did it and the energy that went into it," he says. "I thought if anyone is going to better that and get an Academy Award above him, I'd pay good money to see that."

What did surprise Caine was his Dark Knight costar Bale's profanity-laced tirade on the set of Terminator: Salvation.

"That stunned me, because he's not like that at all," says Caine. "It's completely out of character."

Caine says he hopes he's "still alive" to star in the next sequel. His pick for the next villian? It "would probably be The Riddler," he says, adding it will be tough for the actor to rival Ledger's indelible performance. "I thought it was going to be a tough job for anyone who played the role after Jack Nicholson" in 1989's Batman, he says. "Now Heath is the Joker. So we'll see."



METRO NEWS SERVICES

John pens breakup song about Jen?

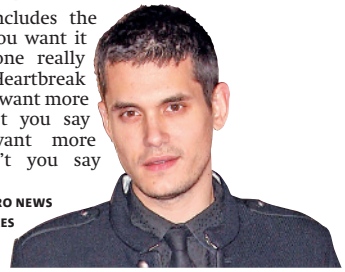
BREAKUP John Mayer insists his breakup with Jennifer Aniston hasn't influenced his songwriting, femalefirst.co.uk reports.

The singer is about to start work on his fifth album but has denied he will draw on recent events in his personal life for his new material.

He said: "I'll be writing about the same things I always wrote about."

Despite his insistence at keeping Jennifer out of his music, the singer debuted a new track, Heartbreak Warfare during his Mayercraft Cruise concerts last weekend, with many speculating the song was penned following the couple's separation.

The song includes the lines: "Once you want it to begin/No one really ever wins/In Heartbreak Warfare/If you want more love/why don't you say so?/If you want more love/why don't you say so?"



METRO NEWS SERVICES

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